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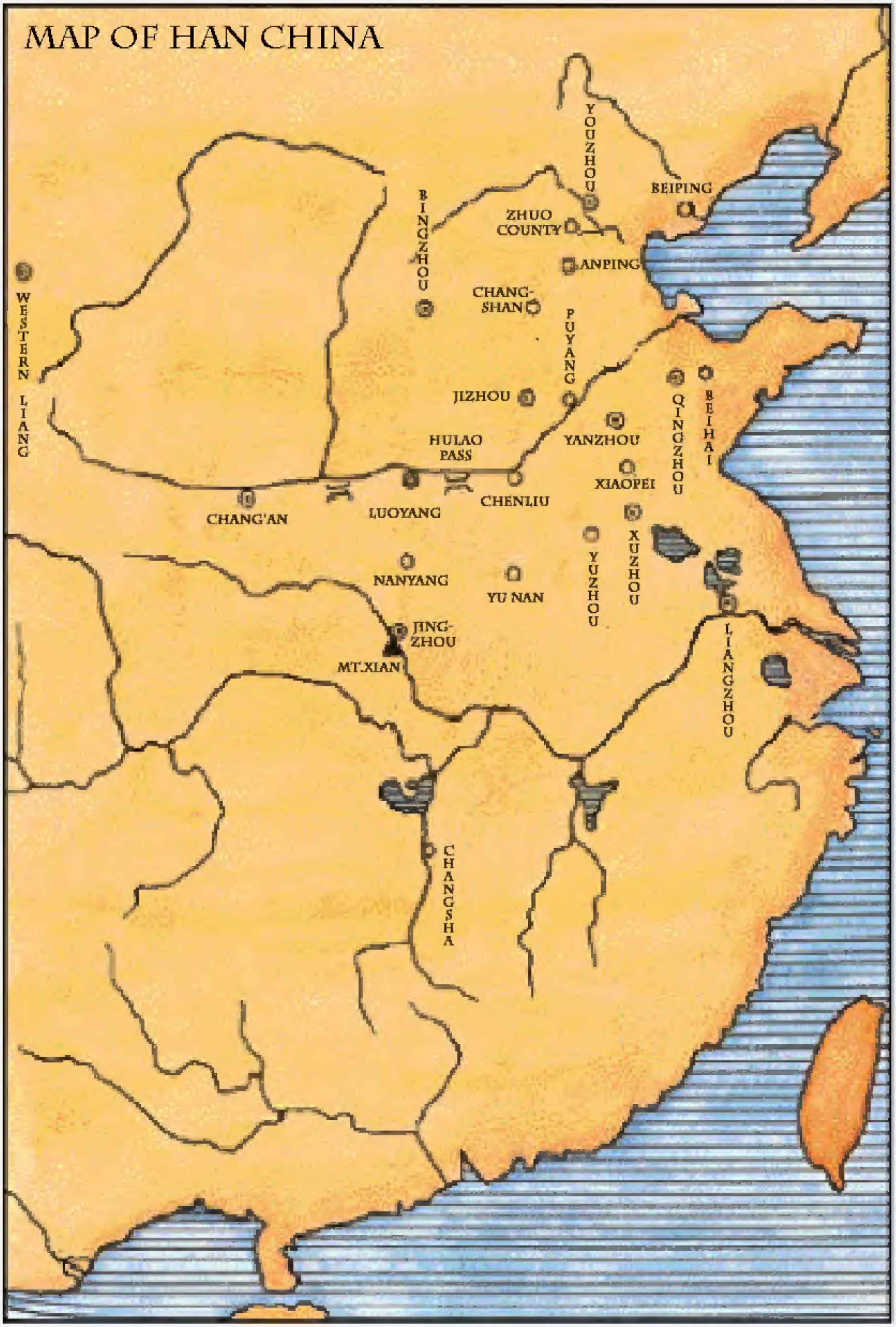

SANGOKUSHI

7

UPHEAVAL OF JIANGDONG

SUN JIAN WENTAI

YOKOYAMA MITSUTERU

SANGOKUSHI
(ROMANCE OF THE
THREE KINGDOMS)

三国志（さんごくし）

VOLUME 07
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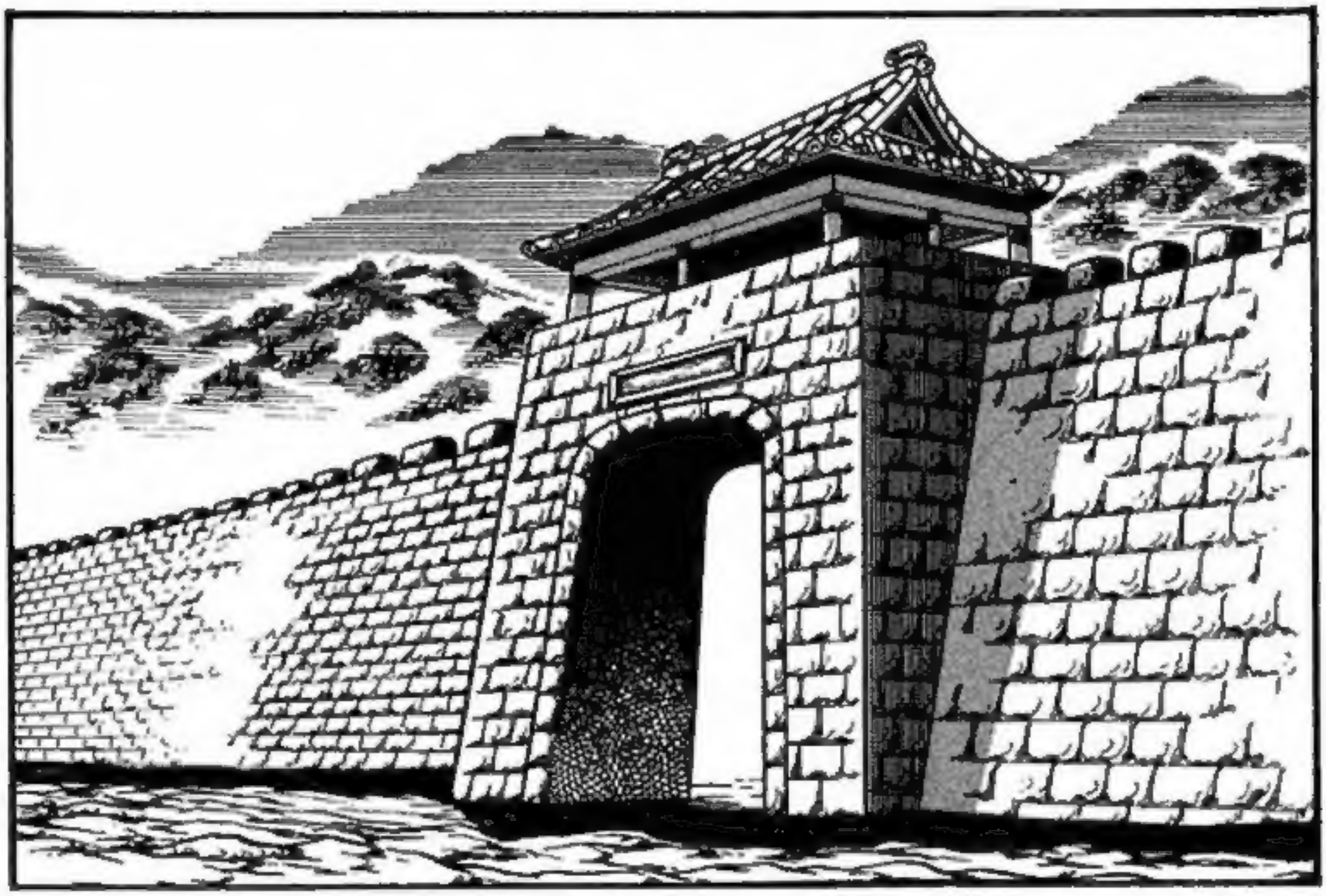
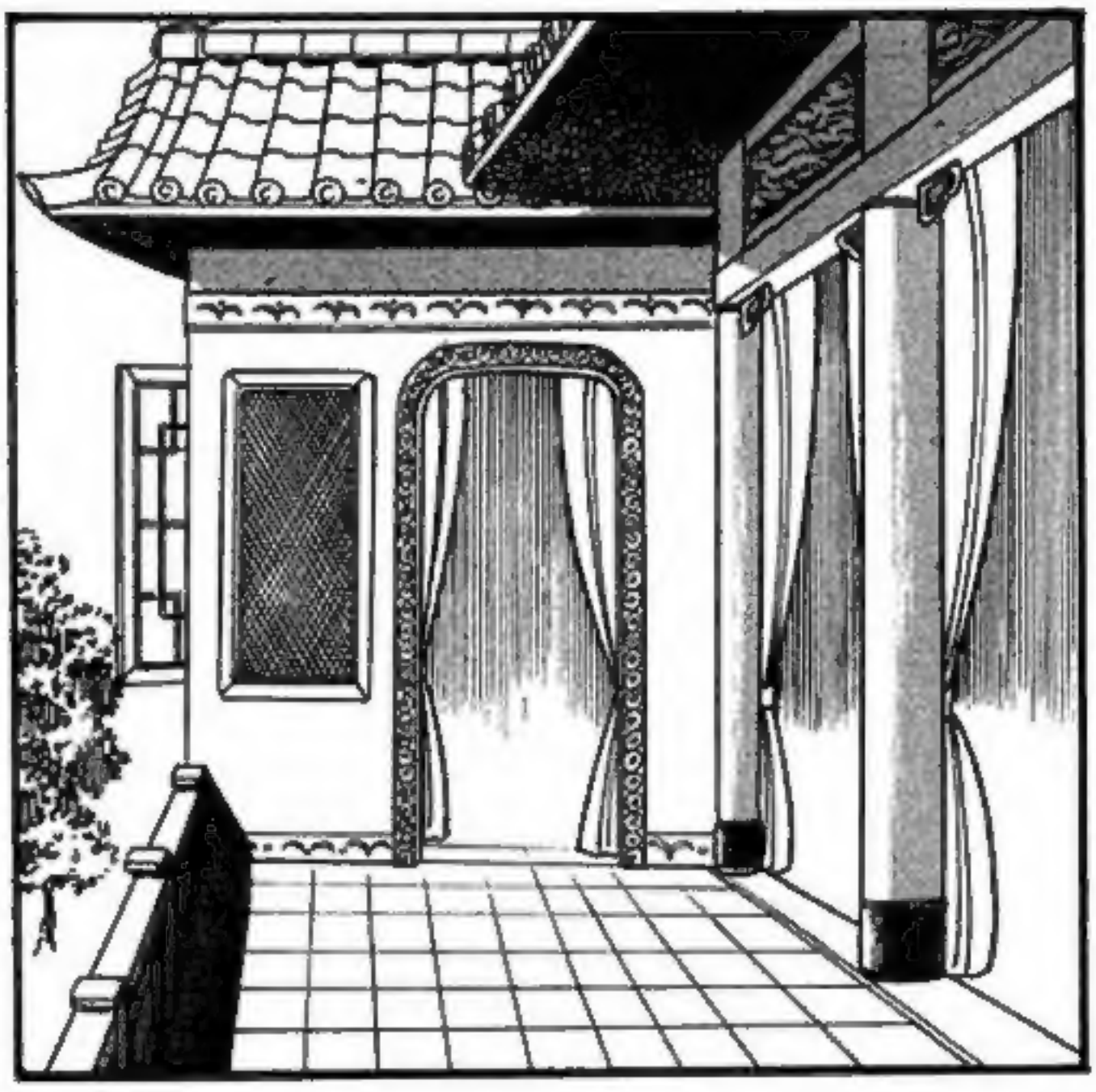
SUN JIAN ARISES





?

MY LORD IS CALLING FOR SIR.

XUANDE AT YOUR SERVICE, SIR.

SEEING AS HOW MY LORD IS IN A GOOD MOOD, I'M SURE HE HAS GOOD NEWS TO SHARE.

I WONDER WHAT COULD IT BE FOR?

AH, XUANDE. THANK YOU FOR COMING. PLEASE, COME CLOSER.

WHAT IS IT, SIR?

I'VE JUST RECEIVED GOOD NEWS.

AFTER THE RECONCILIATION WITH YUAN SHAO, I SENT A LETTER TO THE CAPITAL, RECOMMENDING YOU FOR THE NEW GOVERNOR OF PINGYUAN, GIVEN YOUR VALIANT EFFORTS IN THE PAST.

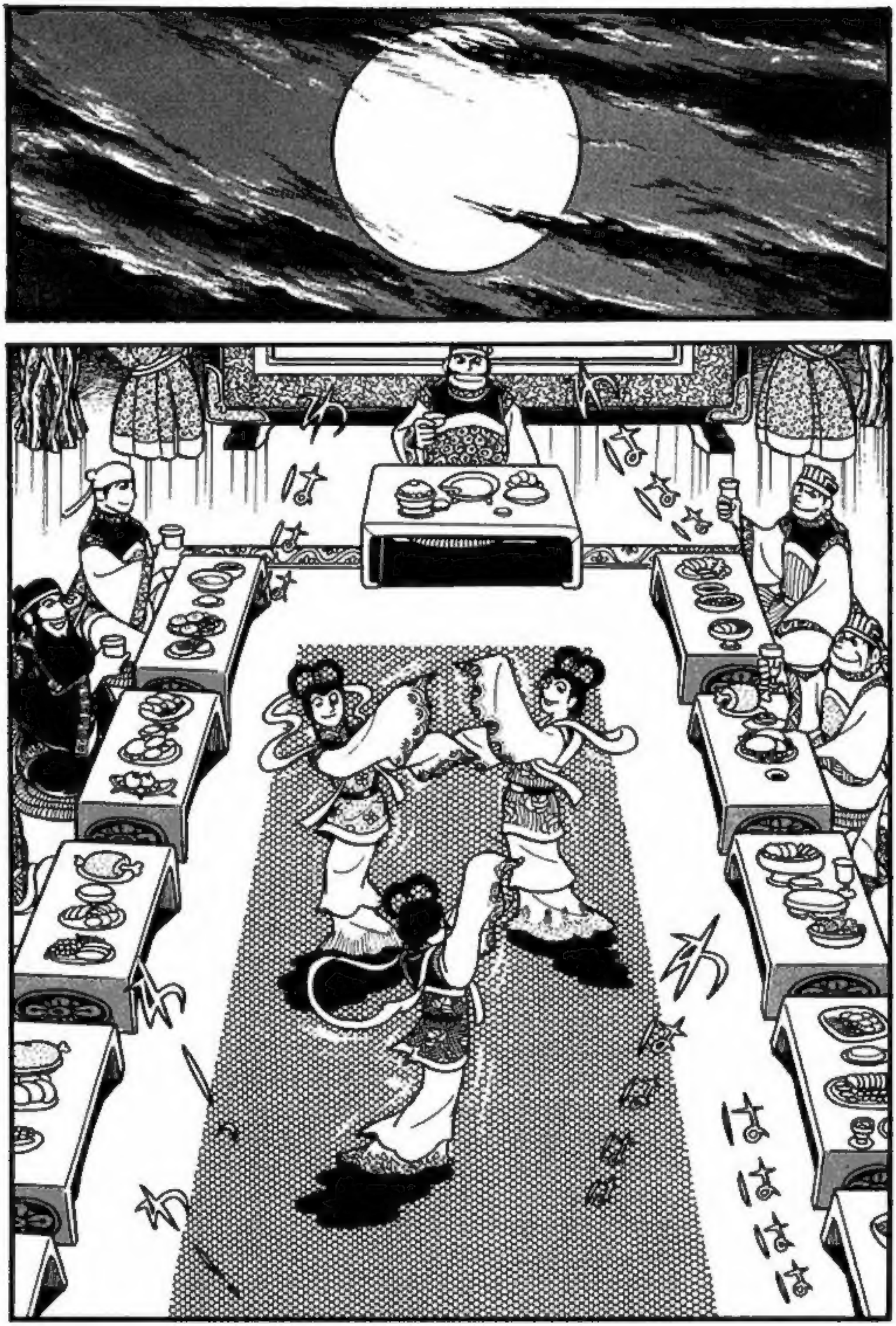
THE IMPERIAL COURT'S REPLY HAS JUST COME BACK AND THEY'VE AGREED TO APPOINT YOU AS PINGYUAN'S GOVERNOR.

WHAT GREAT NEWS IT IS, XUANDE.

THANK YOU, SIR.

THIS IS THE LEAST I COULD DO TO REPAY ALL YOUR HELP UNTIL NOW.

NOW THEN, LET US HOLD A GREAT SEND-OFF BANQUET FOR XUANDE AND TO CONGRATULATE HIS PROMOTION!



COME ON, BROTHER, DRINK A LITTLE MORE! WHAT BETTER OCCASION TO DRINK IS THERE IF NOT TONIGHT?

AHAHA, NICE DANCING LADIES!

SURE.

FINE, BUT POUR IT TO ME IN THIS INSTEAD.

AHAHA, AS EXPECTED OF YOU, GUAN YU!

BUT FINALLY THEY HAVE RECOGNIZED OUR DEEDS AND BROTHER HAS BEEN MADE GOVERNOR OF PINGYUAN! WHAT GREATER HAPPINESS COULD THERE BE THAN THIS!?

WE'VE FOUGHT LONG AND VALIANTLY FOR THE SAKE OF THIS COUNTRY, YET WE WERE ALWAYS SPAT ON AND IGNORED...

SO I SHALL CELEBRATE BY DRINKING THIS!

AHHHH!

I'M GOING TO TAKE A LITTLE STROLL OUTSIDE. I CAN'T DRINK LIKE YOU TWO.

SIR XUANDE!

I BEG OF YOU SIR, PLEASE TAKE ME ALONG TO PINGYUAN!

AH, GOOD EVENING, ZHAO ZILONG.

FROM THE MOMENT I SAW SIR, I KNEW THAT YOU WERE THE MAN I WISHED TO SERVE. PLEASE TAKE ME ALONG AS YOUR RETAINER TO PINGYUAN.

BUT EVEN GONGSUN ZAN GLADLY ACCEPTED DONG ZHUO'S INTERVENTION AND IS NOW BEGINNING TO WAG HIS TAIL TOWARDS HIM LIKE A DOG GREETING HIS MASTER.

AS YOU MAY BE AWARE OF ALREADY, I WAS FORMERLY A RETAINER OF YUAN SHAO. BUT SEEING AS HOW HE WAS NOT A CAPABLE MAN, I ABANDONED HIM AND LATER CAME TO WORK FOR GONGSUN ZAN.

BUT YOU SIR, ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE REST. I BELIEVE THAT YOU WILL ALWAYS HOLD THE PEOPLE'S WILL CLOSE TO HEART AND STAND UP FOR THEM.

THEY CAN NEVER BE THE HERO TO SAVE THE PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY.

GONGSUN ZAN TURNED OUT TO BE NO DIFFERENT FROM YUAN SHAO. THEY ARE BOTH PETTY MEN CONCERNED ONLY FOR THEMSELVES.

SO I BEG OF SIR TO TAKE ME TO PINGYUAN AS YOUR RETAINER.

BUT I KNOW THAT WE WILL MEET ONCE AGAIN.

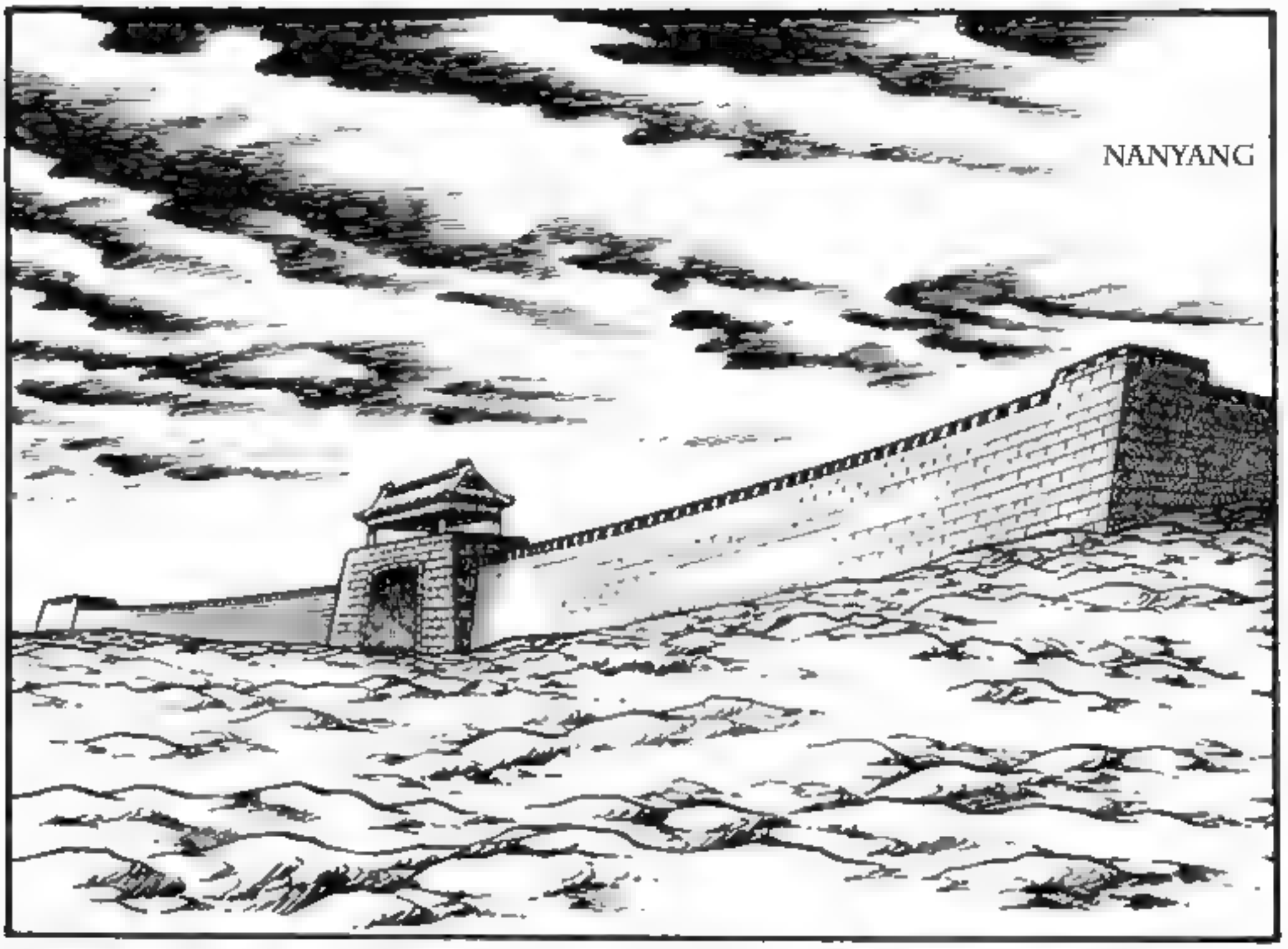
BUT I'M AFRAID THAT THE TIME IS NOT YET RIGHT.

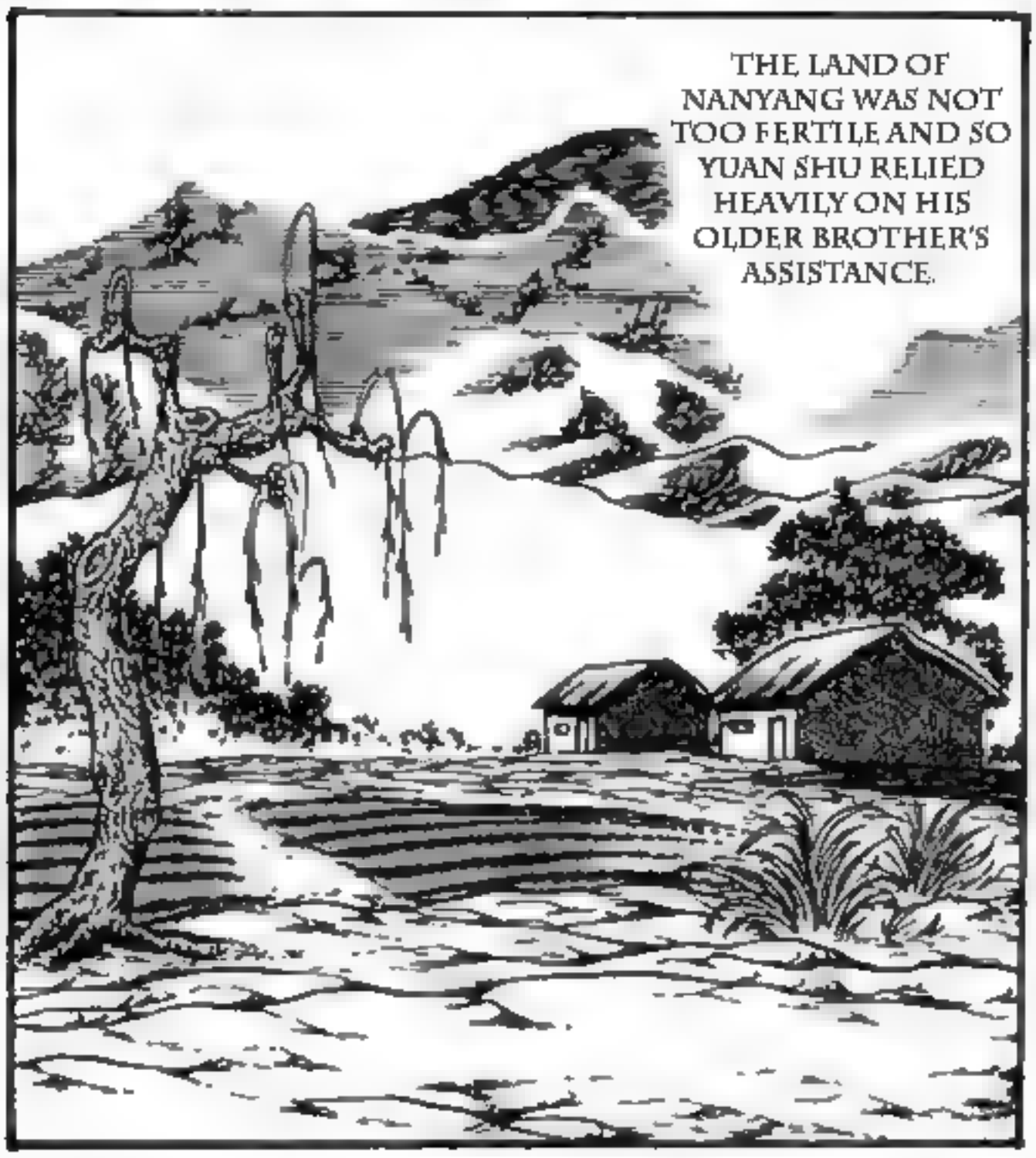
I THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND WORDS,

UNTIL THEN, I WANT YOU TO SERVE GONGSUN ZAN.

BUT WHEN THAT TIME COMES, SIR MUST PROMISE TO MAKE ME YOUR RETAINER.

IF THAT IS WHAT SIR WISHES, THEN I SHALL UNDERSTAND.


NANYANG


THE LAND OF NANYANG WAS NOT TOO FERTILE AND SO YUAN SHU RELIED HEAVILY ON HIS OLDER BROTHER'S ASSISTANCE.

THE GOVERNOR OF NANYANG WAS YUAN SHU, YOUNGER BROTHER OF YUAN SHAO

HAS A RESPONSE STILL NOT ARRIVED YET?

NO, SIR.

I EVEN PARTICIPATED IN HIS ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO AND CAME TO HIS RESCUE MANY TIMES OUT IN THE BATTLEFIELDS... AND YET HE STILL WON'T COMPLY WITH MY REQUEST FOR A MERE 1000 HORSES!?

DAMN IT, JUST HOW MANY DAYS HAS IT BEEN SINCE I SENT AN EMISSARY TO MY OLDER BROTHER!?

AND HE STILL WON'T SEND EVEN A SINGLE GIFT TO HIS DEAR BROTHER!?

WHY, I EVEN HEARD THAT HE HAS TAKEN OVER JIZHOU!

I ALREADY KNOW THAT, YOU OAF!

OUCH!

UMM, GOVERNOR... I REGRET TO INFORM SIR THAT OUR FOOD SUPPLIES ARE BEGINNING TO RUN OUT...

I SHAN'T ASK MY BROTHER FOR ANYTHING FROM NOW ON!

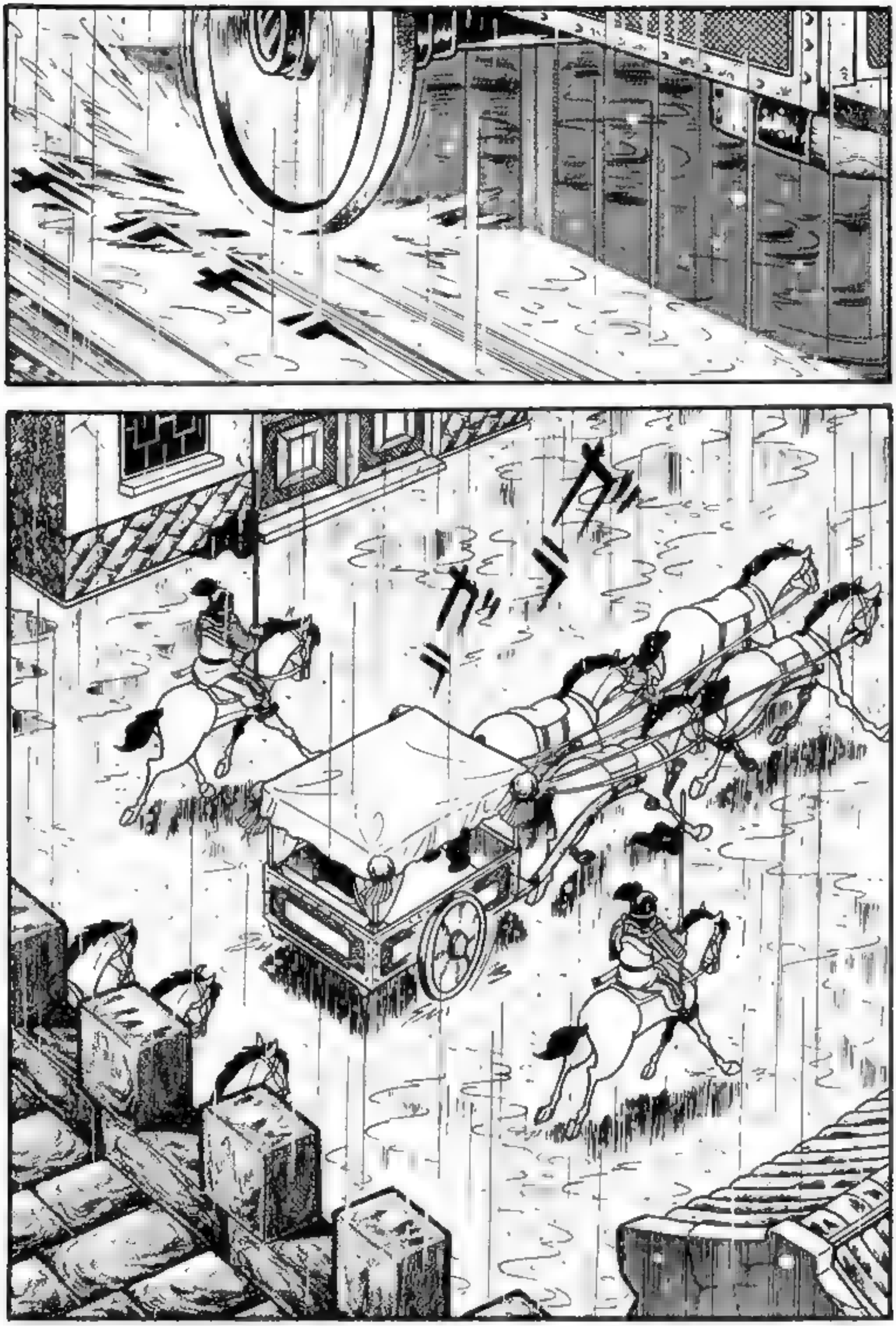
CURSE THAT SO-CALLED BROTHER OF MINE... WE EVEN GREW UP IN THE SAME HOUSEHOLD AND THIS IS HOW HE TREATS ME...!?

LIU BIAO IS A CLOSE ACQUAINTANCE OF MINE, I'M SURE HE WOULD AGREE TO MY REQUEST.

OF COURSE, I'LL JUST ASK TO BORROW SOME GRAIN FROM LIU BIAO OF JINGZHOU!

RIGHT AWAY, SIR.

SEND A MESSAGE RIGHT AWAY TO JINGZHOU ASKING FOR 100,000 BUSHELS OF RICE!



GOOD, LET HIM IN IMMEDIATELY.

SIR, THE MESSENGER SENT TO JINGZHOU HAS COME BACK JUST NOW!

GOOD, AND WHAT WAS LIU BIAO'S REPLY?

I HAVE RETURNED FROM JINGZHOU, GOVERNOR.

WHAT!?

I... I REGRET TO INFORM SIR THAT LIU BIAO HAS REJECTED SIR'S REQUEST.

Y-YES, SIR...

HE TURNED ME DOWN!?

BROTHER... LIU BIAO... *THEY'RE ALL THE SAME!*

NGGHH, DAMN THAT LIU BIAO! ACTING LIKE WE'RE CLOSE FRIENDS WHEN I'M DOING WELL ONLY TO ABANDON ME IN TIMES OF NEED...!

COULD IT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE THAT MY BROTHER PULLED SOME UNDERHANDED TRICK TO MAKE LIU BIAO NOT LEND ME ANY GRAIN...?

HOLD ON...

IT HAS TO BE...! THERE'S NO OTHER EXPLANATION WHY MY CLOSE FRIEND LIU BIAO WOULD SUDDENLY GIVE ME SUCH A COLD TREATMENT!

IF THAT'S THEIR GOAL, THEN I HAVE A PLAN OF MY OWN...

LIU BIAO AND MY BROTHER MUST BE COLLUDING TOGETHER TO BRING ME DOWN!

THERE'S ONE MAN WHO BEARS A GRUDGE AGAINST BOTH LIU BIAO AND MY BROTHER, YUAN SHAO!

THAT'S IT!

I'M SURE THAT SUN JIAN WOULD LIKE TO GET BACK AT BOTH OF THEM.

IT'S SUN JIAN! HE WAS CHASED BY BOTH LIU BIAO AND YUAN SHAO'S ARMY EVEN THOUGH HE WAS THEIR ALLY, AND BARELY MANAGED TO ESCAPE WITH HIS LIFE!

YES, SIR.

BRING ME A BRUSH!

HAHA... YUAN SHAO, YOUR LITTLE BROTHER WON'T OBEDIENTLY DO AS YOU SAY FOREVER...

IF YOU WILL LEAD AN ARMY TO ATTACK JINGZHOU, THEN I SHALL HELP AS WELL. BY WORKING TOGETHER, JINGZHOU WILL BE IN YOUR HANDS, JIZHOU IN MINE, AND WE WILL BOTH HAVE OUR REVENGE.

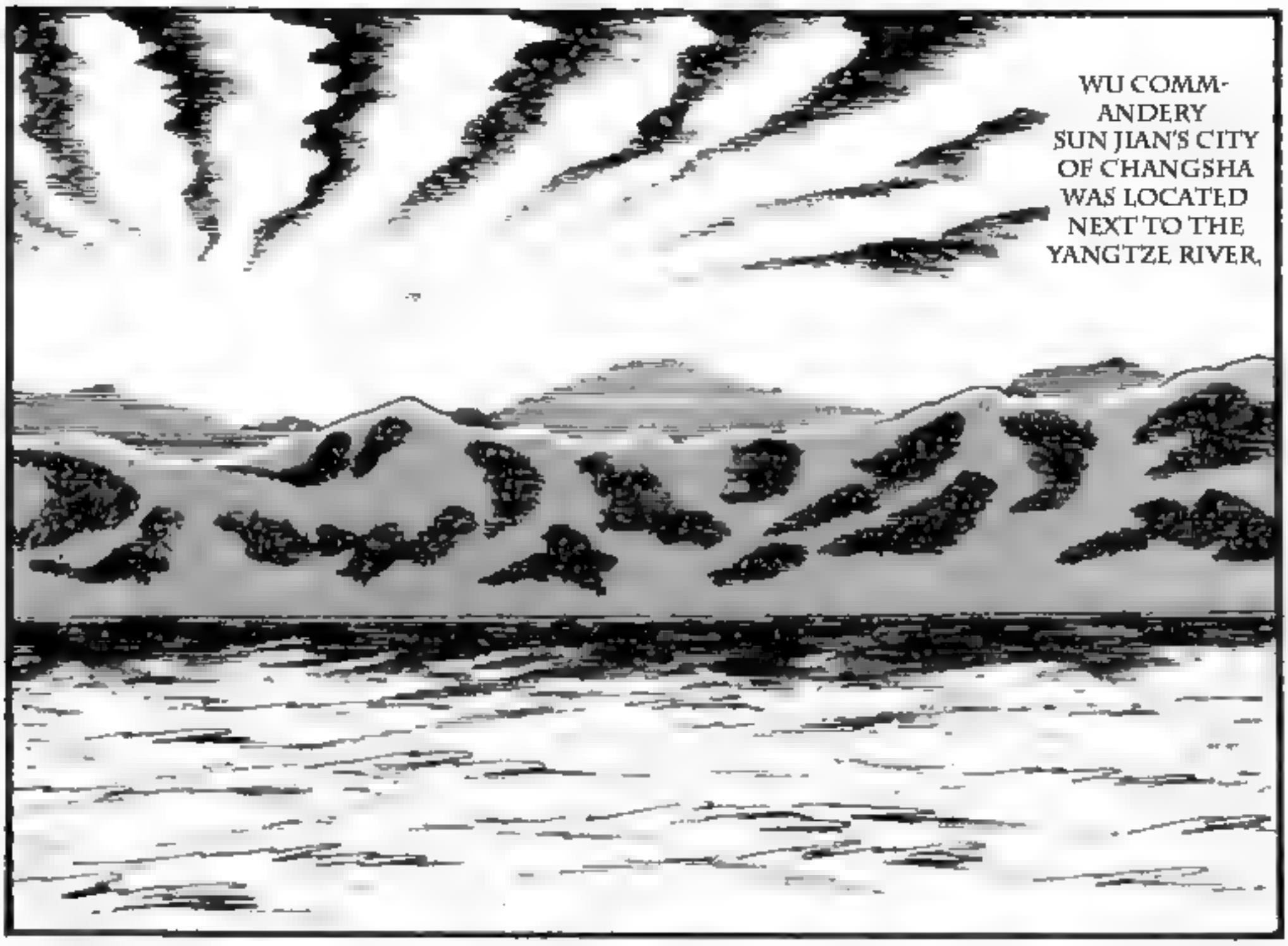
IT WAS MY BROTHER YUAN SHAO WHO ATTEMPTED TO KILL YOU SO THAT HE COULD RETRIEVE THE IMPERIAL SEAL YOU PURPORTEDLY FOUND. AND IT IS YUAN SHAO AGAIN, WHO IS CURRENTLY PLOTTING WITH LIU BIAO TO OVERTAKE YOUR TERRITORY IN JIANGDONG.

YES, SIR.

GO DELIVER THIS TO THE GOVERNOR OF CHANGSHA RIGHT AWAY.

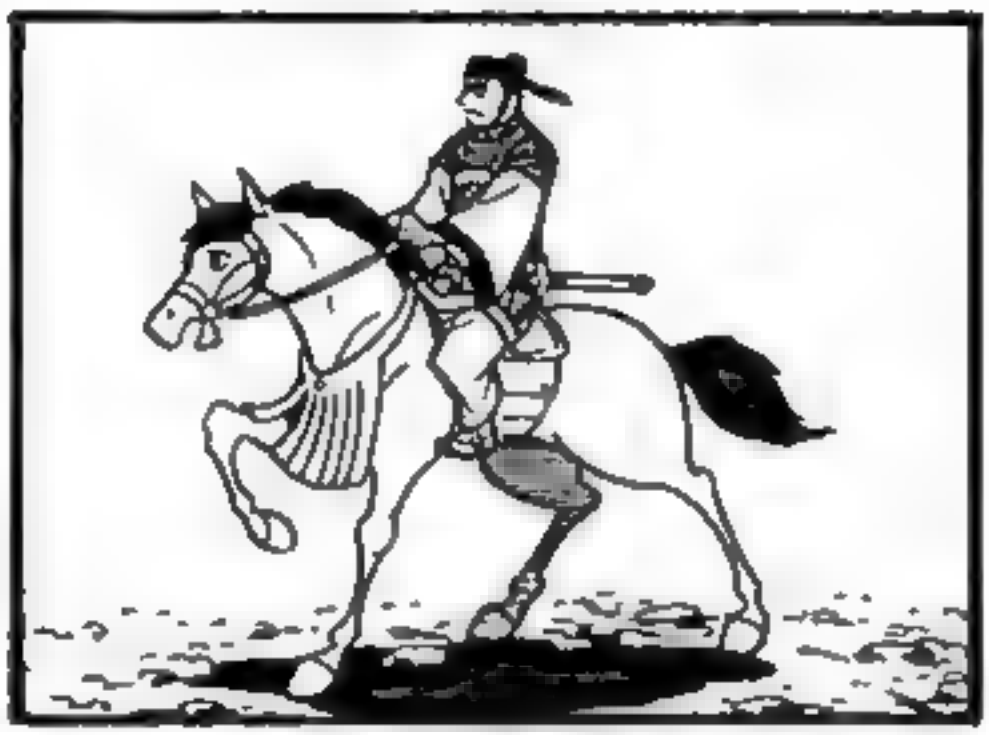
GOOD, GOOD.

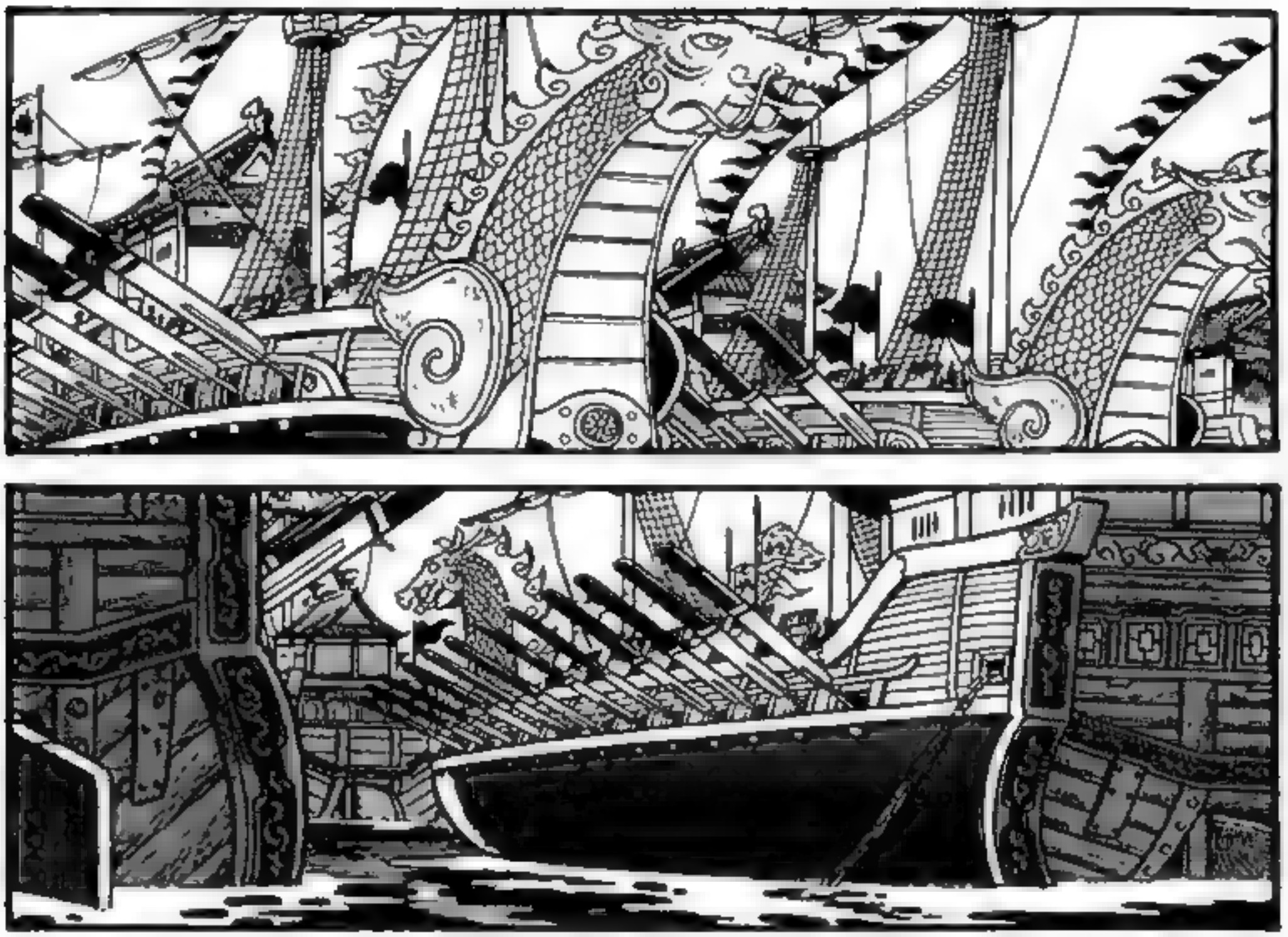
AND SO YUAN SHU'S EMISSARY RODE OFF INTO THE NIGHT CARRYING A SECRET MESSAGE TO SUN JIAN OF WU COMMANDERY

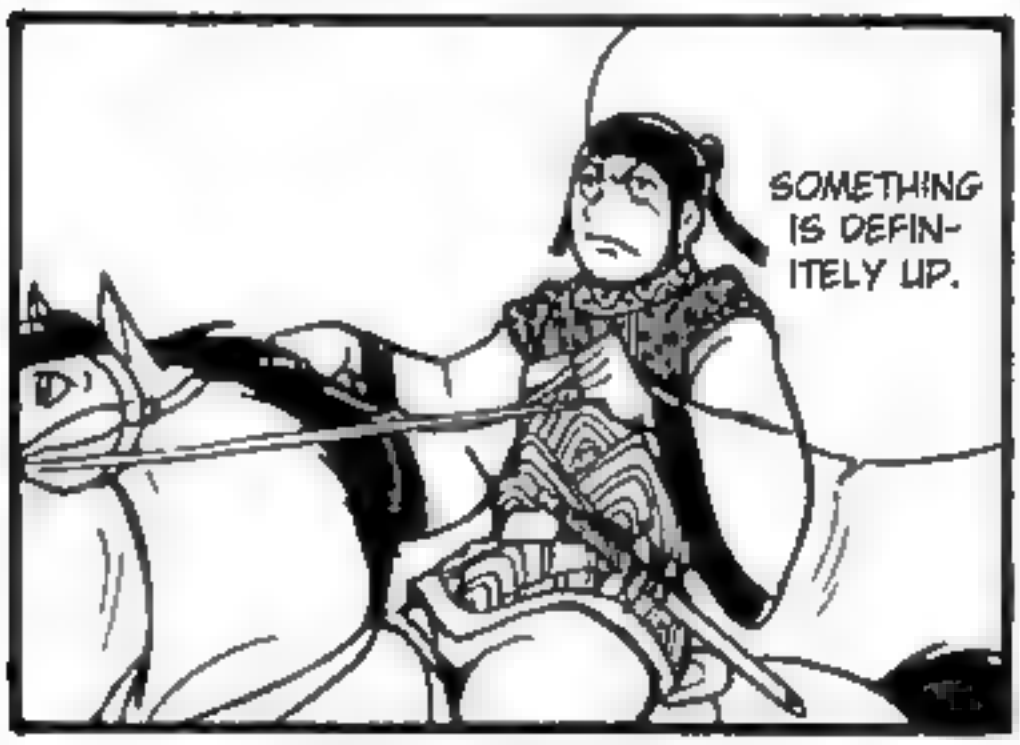

WU COMM-
ANDERY
SUN JIAN'S CITY
OF CHANGSHA
WAS LOCATED
NEXT TO THE
YANGTZE RIVER.

AND DUE TO
ITS GEOGRAPH
ICAL ADVAN-
TAGES, THE
CITY THRIVED
AND HAD A
STRONG
MILITARY

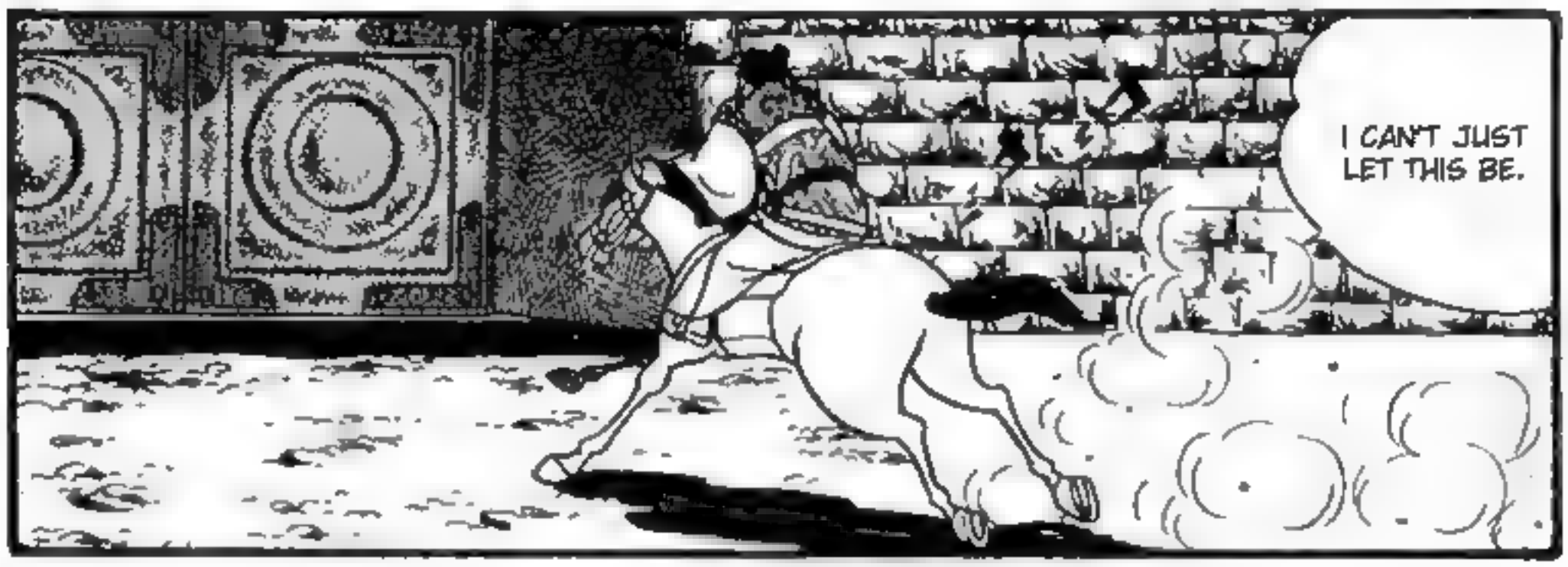
HMM?






SOMETHING IS DEFIN-ITELY UP.

OUR NAVY SEEMS TO HAVE ALL GATHERED... JUST WHAT IS GOING ON?


I CAN'T JUST LET THIS BE.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING SO FLUSTERED FOR?

SIR! SIR!

HAHA, SO YOU SAW, DID YOU?

HOW COULD I NOT LOOK FLUSTERED WHEN OUR ENTIRE NAVY HAS BEEN ASSEMBLED?

WHAT!?

I AM PLANNING TO ATTACK JINGZHOU WITH THESE 500 SHIPS.

I TRUST YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN THE HARDSHIPS I FACED AFTER JOINING THE ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO.

W-WHY IS SIR SUDDENLY PLANNING TO DO SUCH A THING...?

NOT ONLY THAT, THEY ATTEMPTED TO KILL ME WHEN THEY LEARNED I HAD OBTAINED THE IMPERIAL SEAL.

WHEN I WAS VALIANTLY FIGHTING AT SISHUI PASS, YUAN SHAO DID NOT EVEN BOTHER TO SEND ME RATIONS AND SO MY STARVED MEN SUFFERED A HUMILATING DEFEAT.

AND THAT TIME HAS FINALLY COME.

I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR A CHANCE TO EXACT MY REVENGE.

AFTER BEING PURSUED BY YUAN SHAO AND LIU BIAO, DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA JUST HOW MANY MEN OUT OF THE THOUSANDS I INITIALLY BROUGHT THAT CAME BACK ALIVE!? DO NOT TELL ME YOU HAVE ALREADY FORGOTTEN THIS!

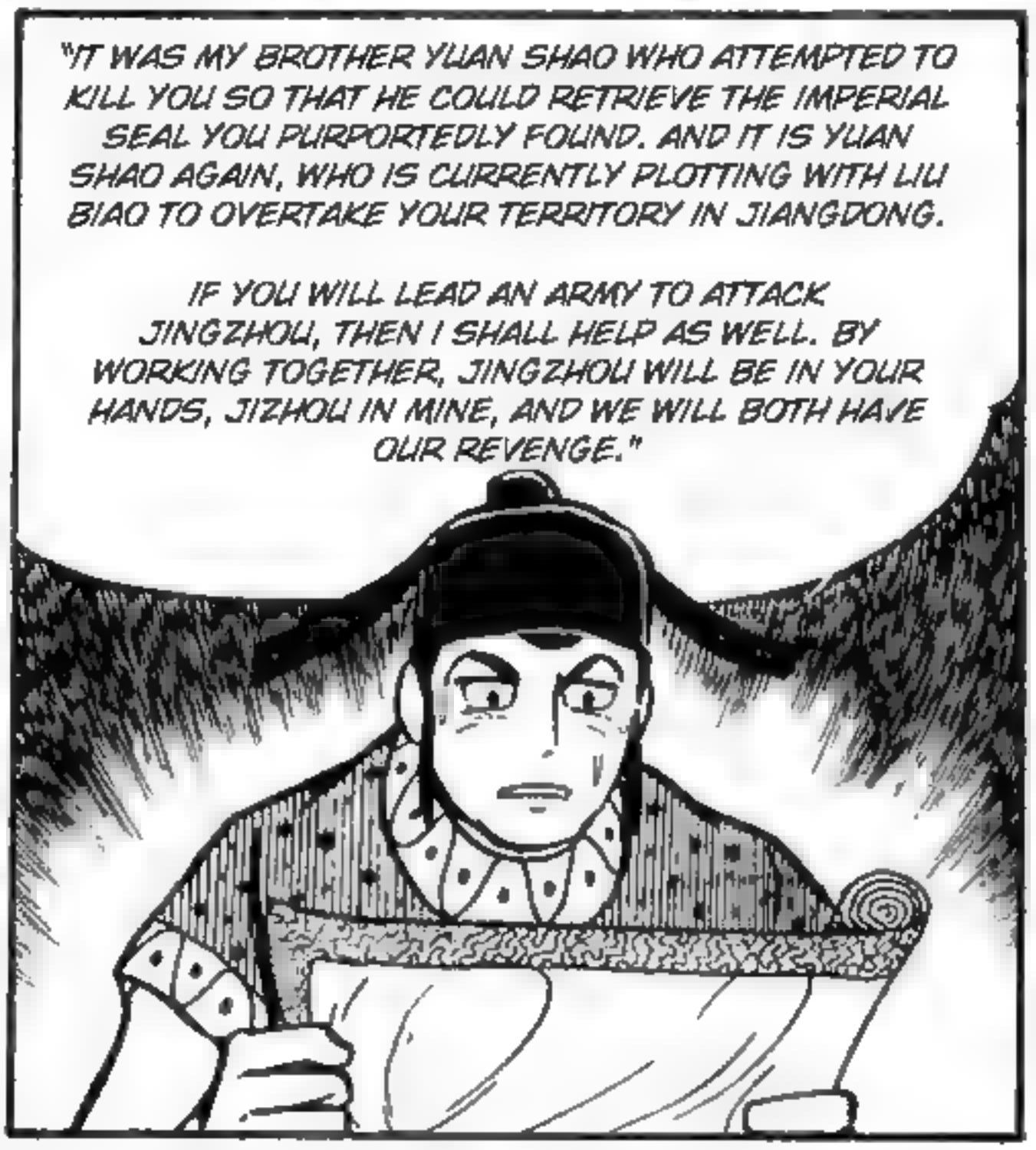
YES. MY CHANCE FOR REVENGE IS HERE AT LAST.

FINALLY COME...?

READ THIS.

IT IS A MESSAGE I RECEIVED FROM NANYANG'S GOVERNOR, YUAN SHU.

DOES SIR REALLY PLAN TO ATTACK YUAN SHAO AND LIU BIAO WITH YUAN SHU?


"IT WAS MY BROTHER YUAN SHAO WHO ATTEMPTED TO KILL YOU SO THAT HE COULD RETRIEVE THE IMPERIAL SEAL YOU PURPORTEDLY FOUND. AND IT IS YUAN SHAO AGAIN, WHO IS CURRENTLY PLOTTING WITH LIU BIAO TO OVERTAKE YOUR TERRITORY IN JIANGDONG.
IF YOU WILL LEAD AN ARMY TO ATTACK JINGZHOU, THEN I SHALL HELP AS WELL. BY WORKING TOGETHER, JINGZHOU WILL BE IN YOUR HANDS, JIZHOU IN MINE, AND WE WILL BOTH HAVE OUR REVENGE."

HAHAHA, OF COURSE I UNDERSTAND THAT.

TO BELIEVE YUAN SHU BASED UPON ONE LETTER AND WAGE WAR... DOES SIR NOT BELIEVE THIS TO BE A LITTLE RASH AND EVEN DANGEROUS!?

BUT EVEN SO, IT IS CLEAR THIS HIS RELATIONS WITH YUAN SHAO AND LIU BIAO HAVE DETERIORATED.

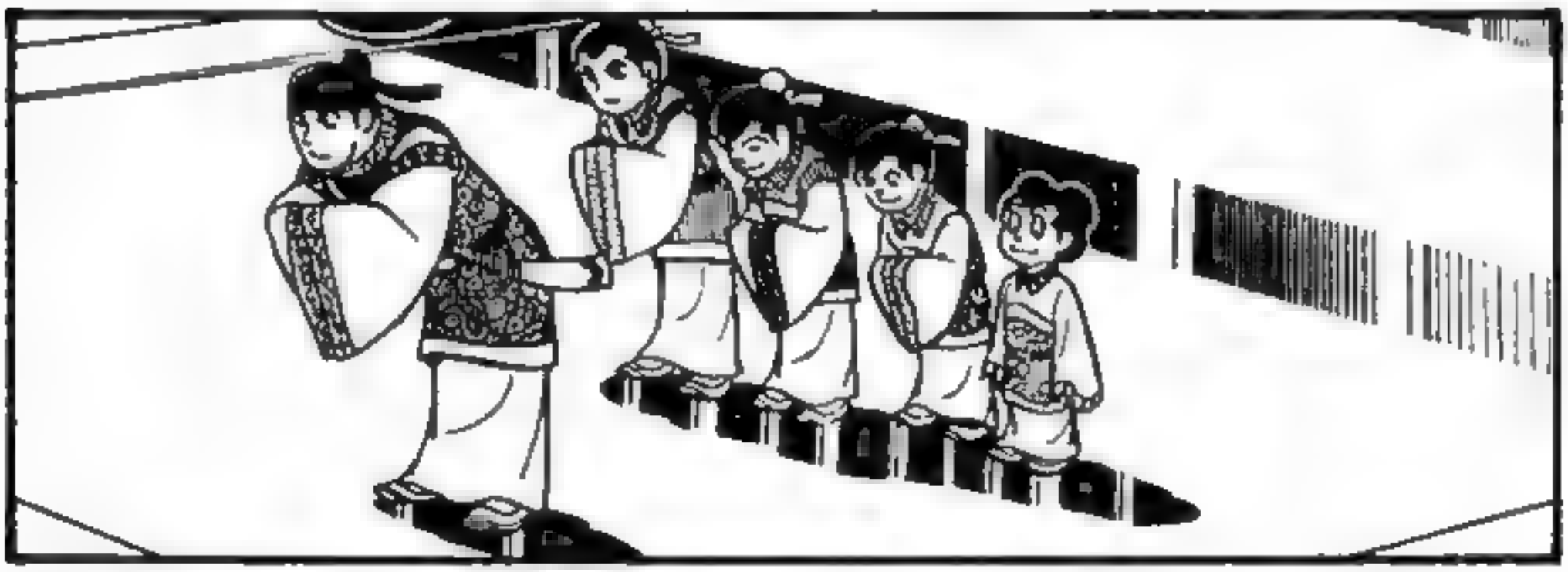
I AM WELL AWARE THAT YUAN SHU IS A DECEITFUL MAN INCAPABLE OF BEING TRUSTED.

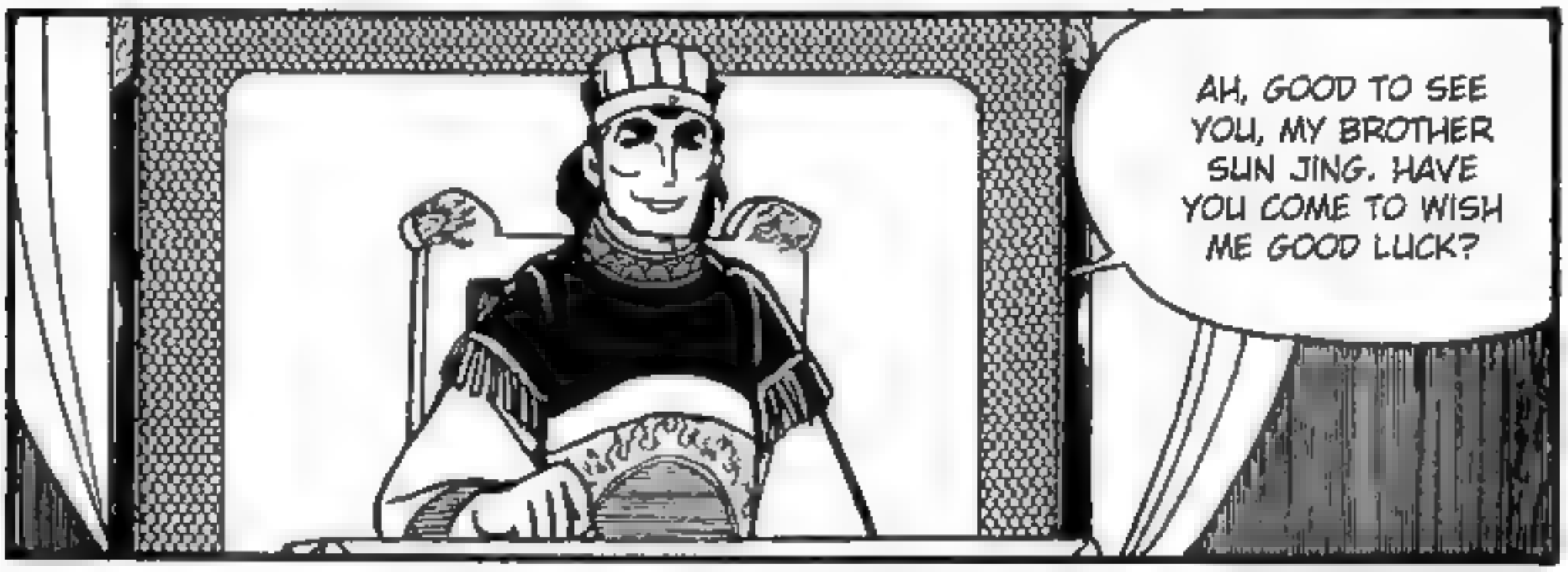
MOREOVER, I DO NOT EVEN NEED TO RELY ON YUAN SHU FOR HELP. I CAN EXACT MY REVENGE ON MY OWN STRENGTH ALONE.

ARE YOU TELLING ME THE IGNOMINIOUS DEATH OF MY MEN IS NOT ENOUGH!?

BUT SIR, TO WAGE WAR, THERE MUST BE SOME GREAT MORAL REASON TO DO SO. WITHOUT ONE, THE PEOPLE MIGHT NOT FORGIVE YOUR ACTIONS.

ARE YOU TELLING ME TO FORGET MY RETAINERS WHO HAVE DIED TO PROTECT ME!?
IS THAT SO? GOOD, LET THEM IN.
SIR, YOUR CHILDREN ARE HERE TO SEE YOU.




AH, GOOD TO SEE YOU, MY BROTHER SUN JING. HAVE YOU COME TO WISH ME GOOD LUCK?

WHAT!?

NO BROTHER, I'VE COME TO DISSUADE YOU FROM FIGHTING.

IT IS TOO LATE TO CHANGE MY MIND NOW.

PLEASE, I BEG OF YOU TO RECONSIDER YOUR DECISION.

BROTHER, IF IN THE 1 IN A MILLION CHANCE THAT YOU HAPPEN TO FALL IN BATTLE, JUST WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOUR CHILDREN?

CEASE THIS TALK! YOU'LL ONLY BRING UPON BAD LUCK!

BUT BROTHER ...!

NO MATTER THESE CHILDREN'S FATES OR HOW OTHERS MIGHT TRY TO DISSUADE YOU, YOU CAN COUNT ON YOUR BROTHER SUN JING TO EVEN GO OUT AND FIGHT IN BATTLE.

BROTHER, IF THIS WAR WAS TRULY FOR THE SAKE OF THE PEOPLE, I WOULD NOT STOP YOU.

SILENCE!

BUT YOU ARE WAGING WAR OUT OF A PERSONAL GRUDGE. TO INJURE OUR SOLDIERS AND STRAIN OUR PEOPLE JUST TO SATSIFY ONE'S GRUDGE IS IMMORAL!

CONFLICTING AS IT MAY SEEM TO YOU, I HAVE ASPIRATIONS OF BOTH PROTECTING MY PEOPLE AND CONQUERING THIS LAND!

YOU SAY THAT MY CAUSE IS UNJUST BUT JUST HOW CAN YOU UNDERSTAND HOW I FEEL!?

JUST WATCH! I SHALL MAKE THE NAME OF SUN KNOWN THROUGH-OUT THE LAND!

.....

.....

FATHER, IF YOU ARE DETERMINED TO GO OUT IN BATTLE, PLEASE ALLOW ME TO ACCOMPANY YOU AS WELL.

YES, FATHER.

THEN PREPARE YOURSELF UNTIL THE DAY WE DEPART.

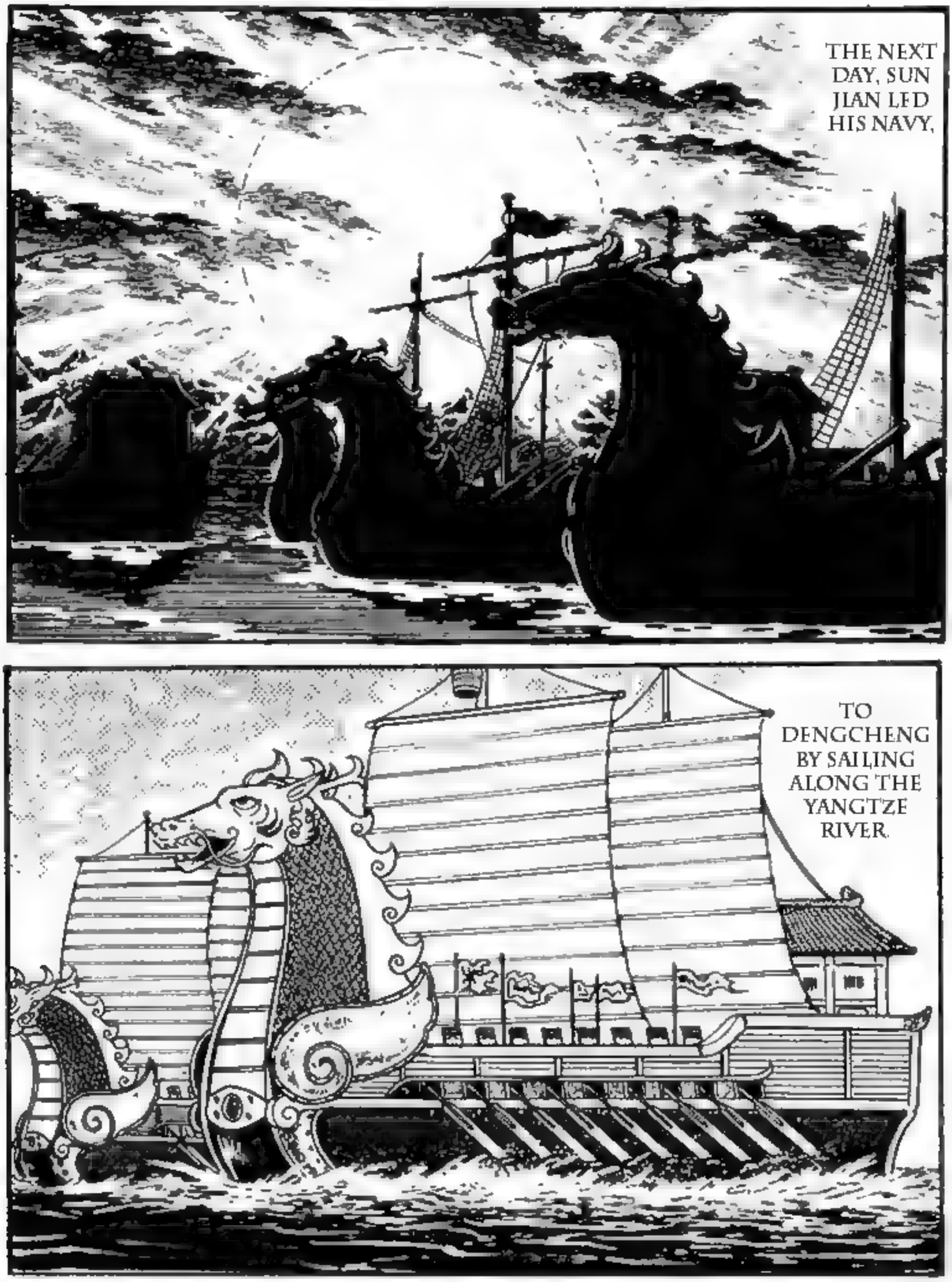
OHH, WELL SAID, MY ELDEST SON SUN CE. I ALWAYS KNEW YOU WOULD GROW UP TO BE A FINE MAN.

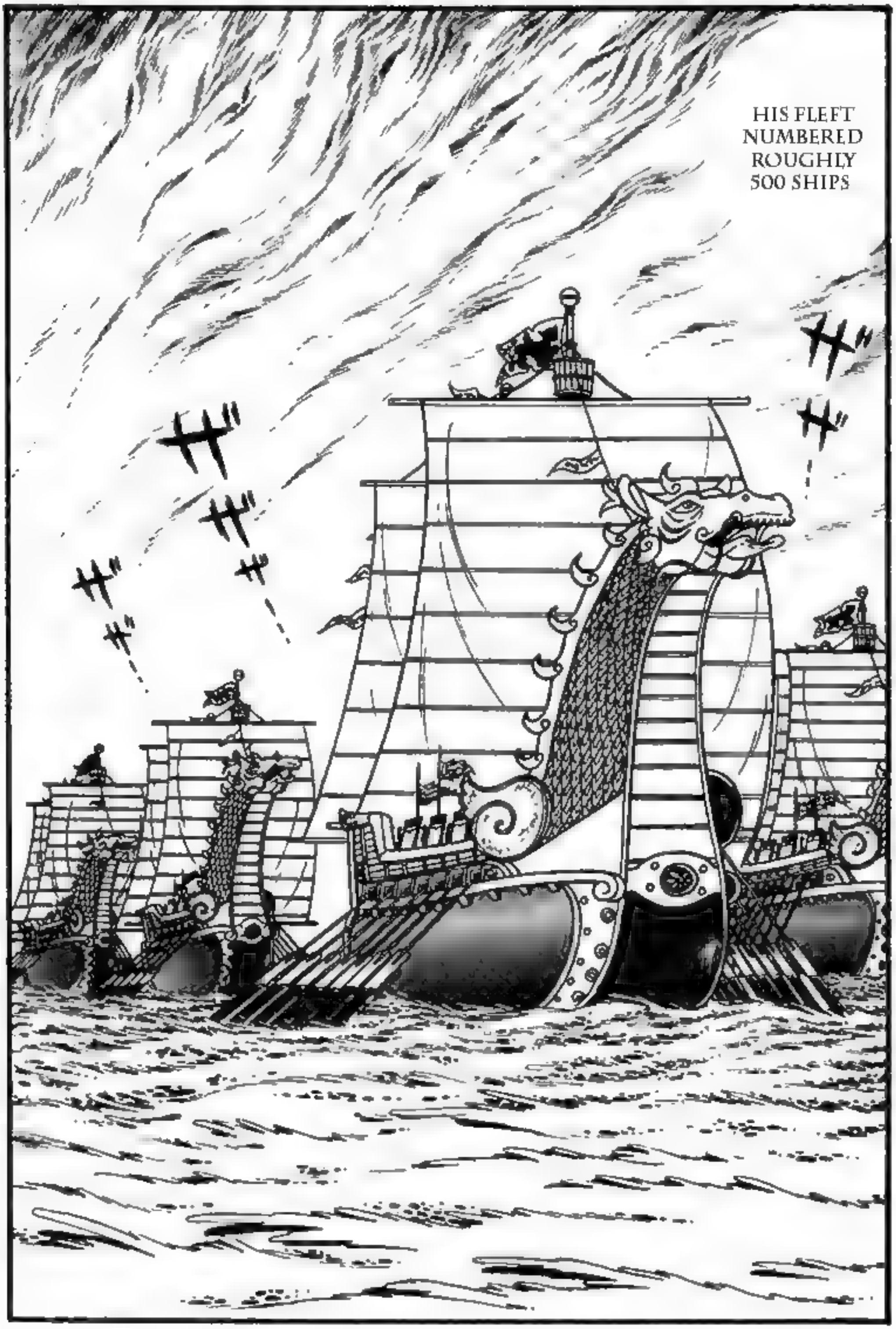
YES, FATHER.

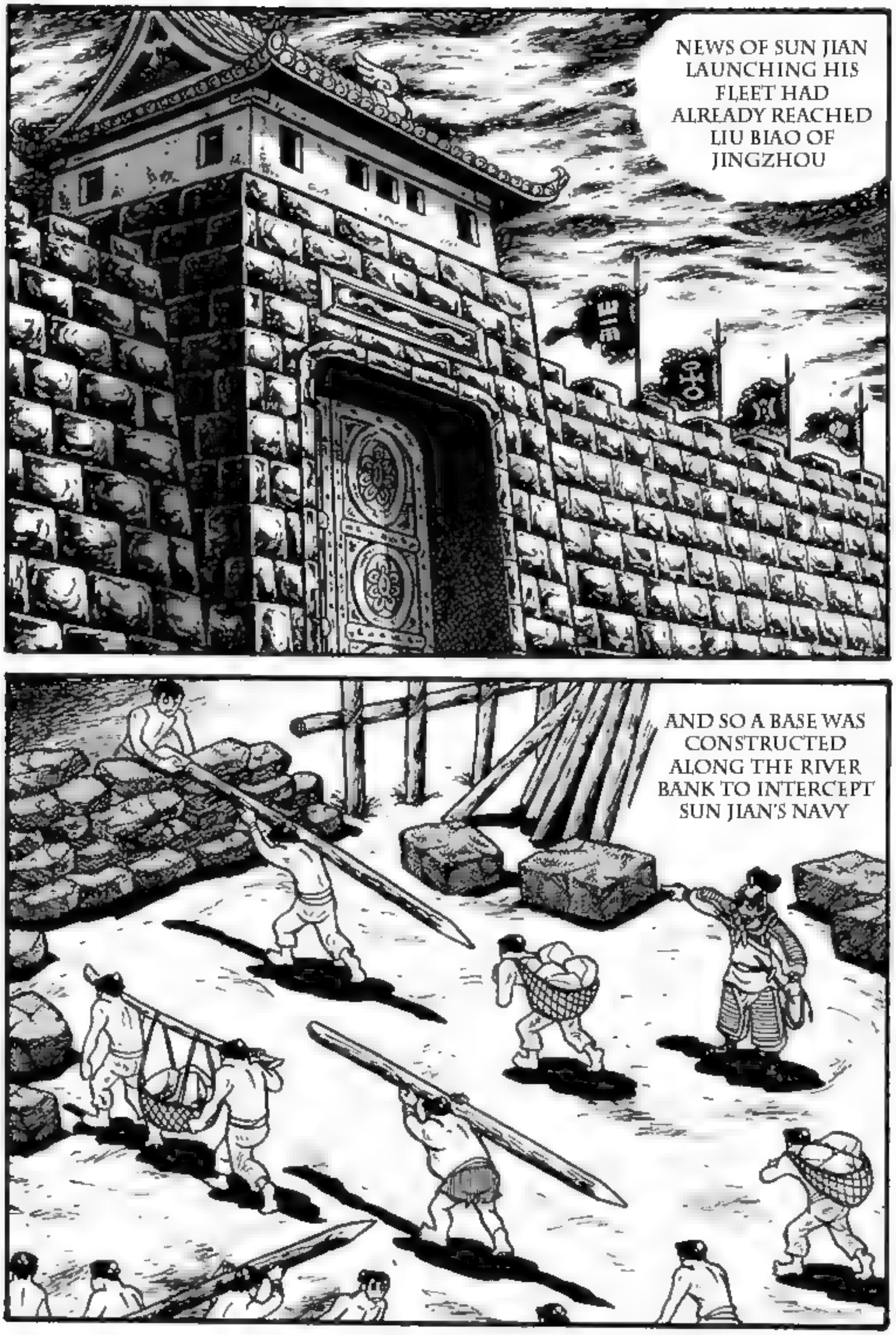
SUN QUAN, YOU STAY HERE IN CHANGSHA WITH YOUR UNCLE SUN JING AND PROTECT OUR HOME.

THEN LET US DEPART FOR BATTLE TOMORROW!

ATTACK ON JINGZHOU



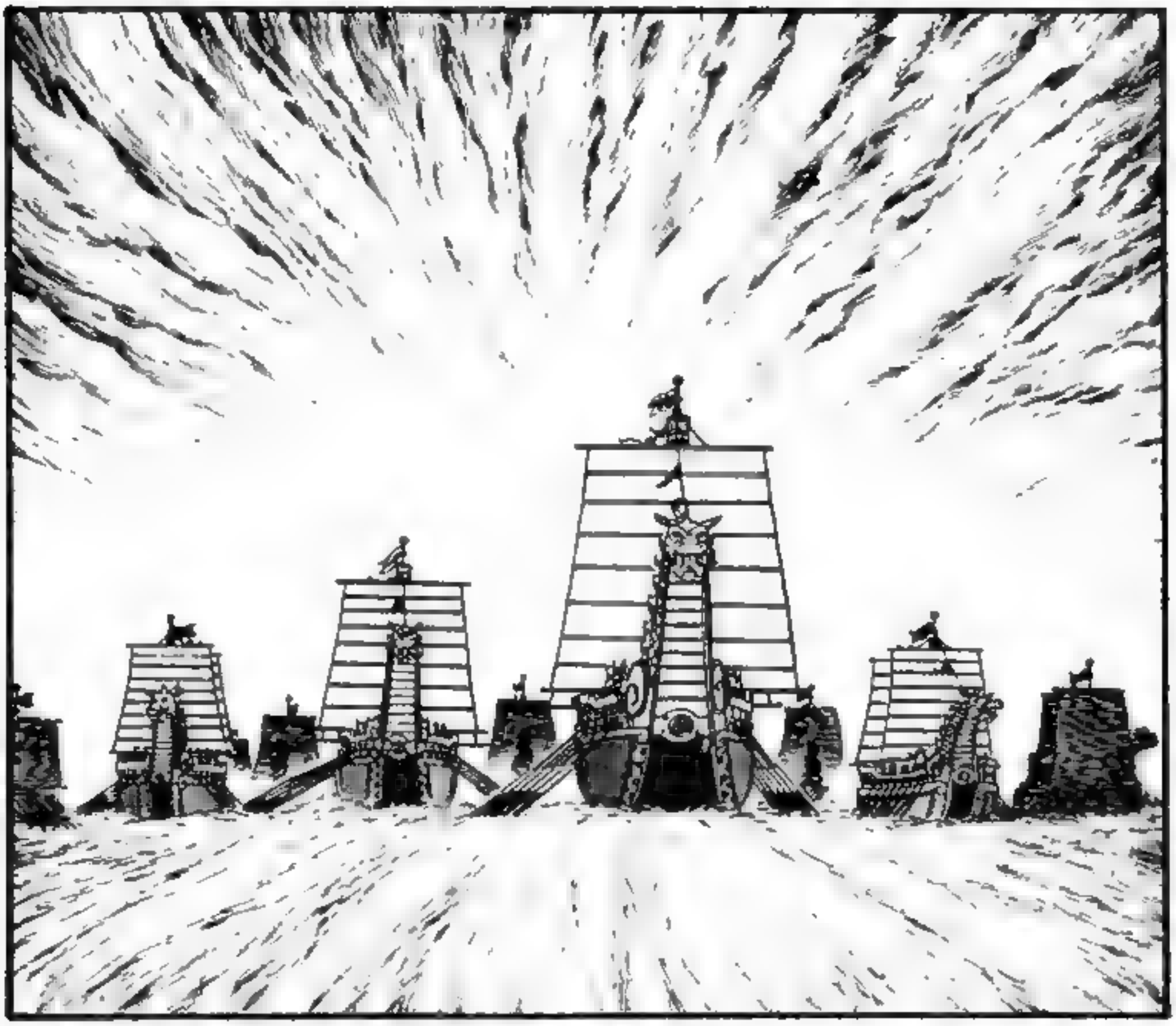

HIS FLEET
NUMBERED
ROUGHLY
500 SHIPS

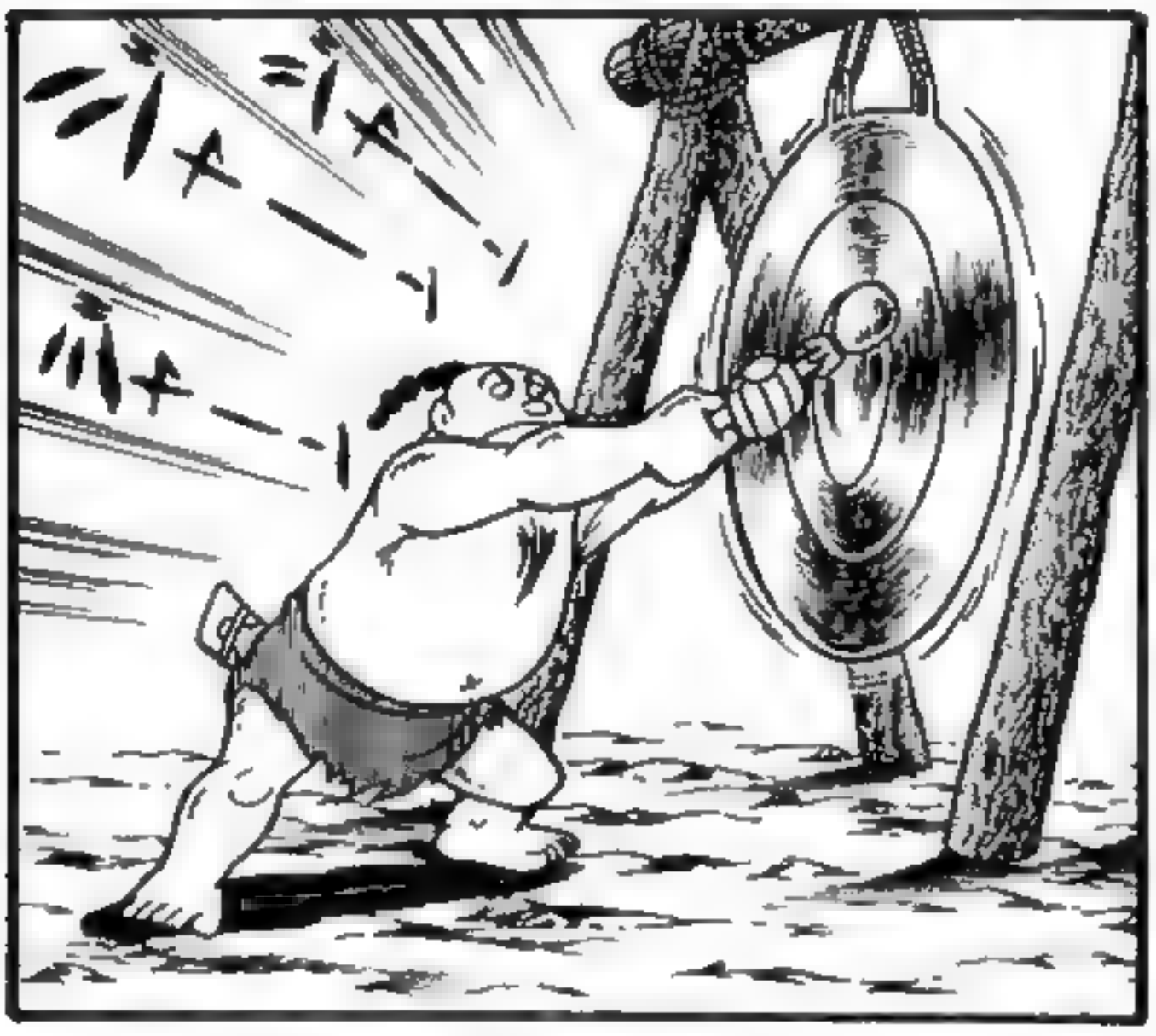

NEWS OF SUN JIAN LAUNCHING HIS FLEET HAD ALREADY REACHED LIU BIAO OF JINGZHOU
AND SO A BASE WAS CONSTRUCTED ALONG THE RIVER BANK TO INTERCEPT SUN JIAN'S NAVY

THIS FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE WOULD BE HELD BY HUANG ZU THE PREFECT OF JIANGXIA.

AH!

ENEMY FLEET SPOTTED!





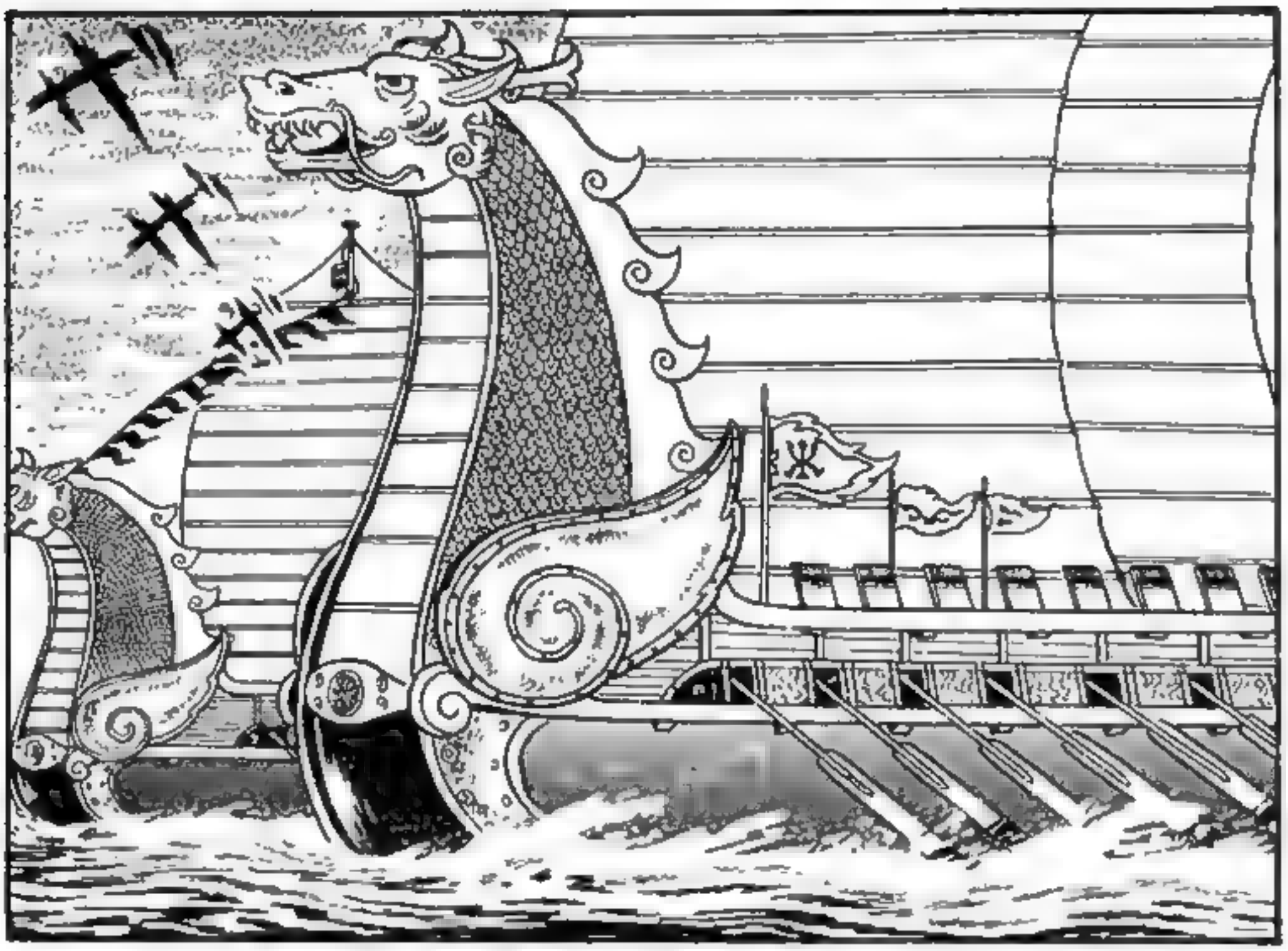
RING THE GONG!

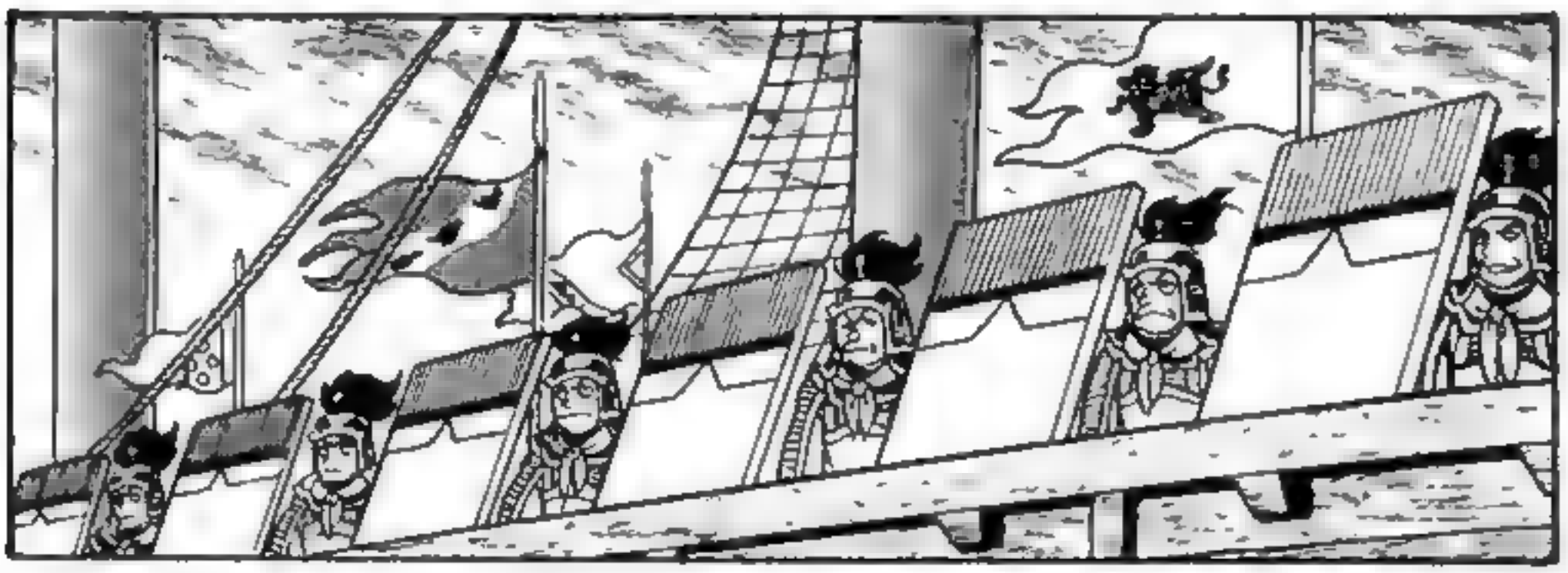
MAKE SURE TO NOT ATTACK UNTIL I GIVE THE SIGNAL.

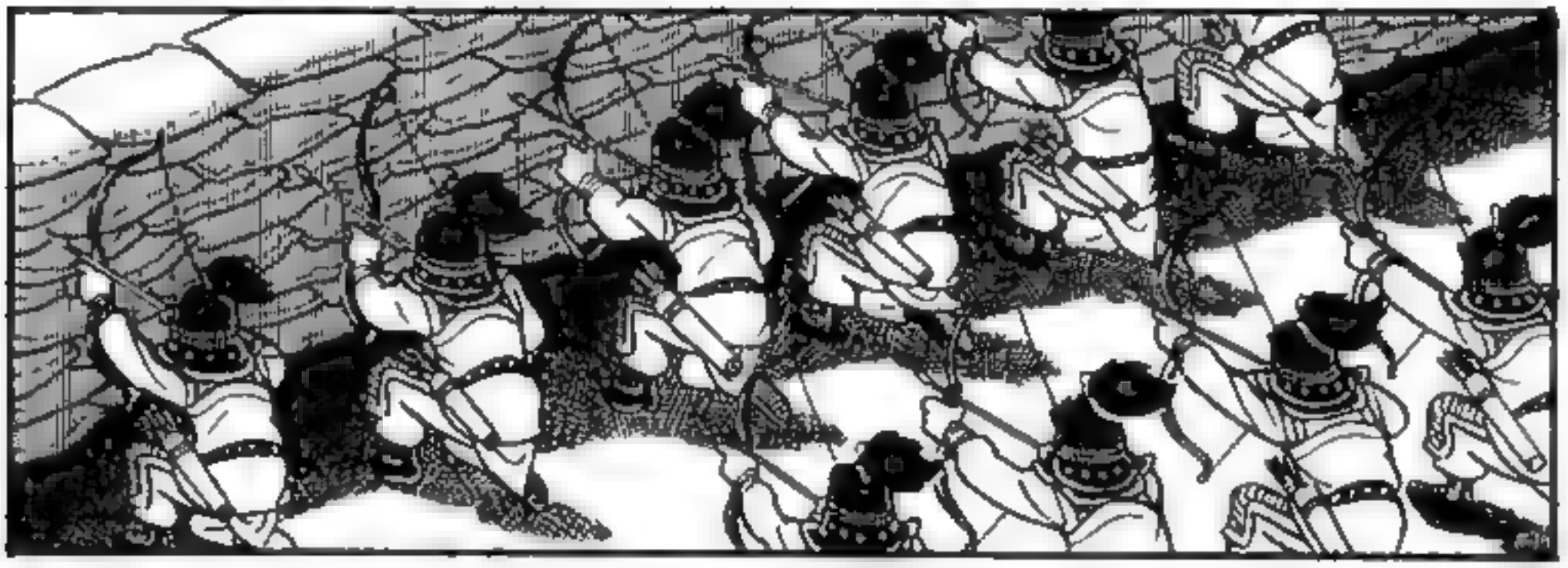
IS THAT SO?

GENERAL HUANG ZU! SUN JIAN'S FLEET HAS BEEN SIGHTED!

HEH HEH HEH... SO YOU'VE FINALLY COME, EH? WELL, I'LL BE SURE TO GIVE YOU THE PROPER WELCOME.

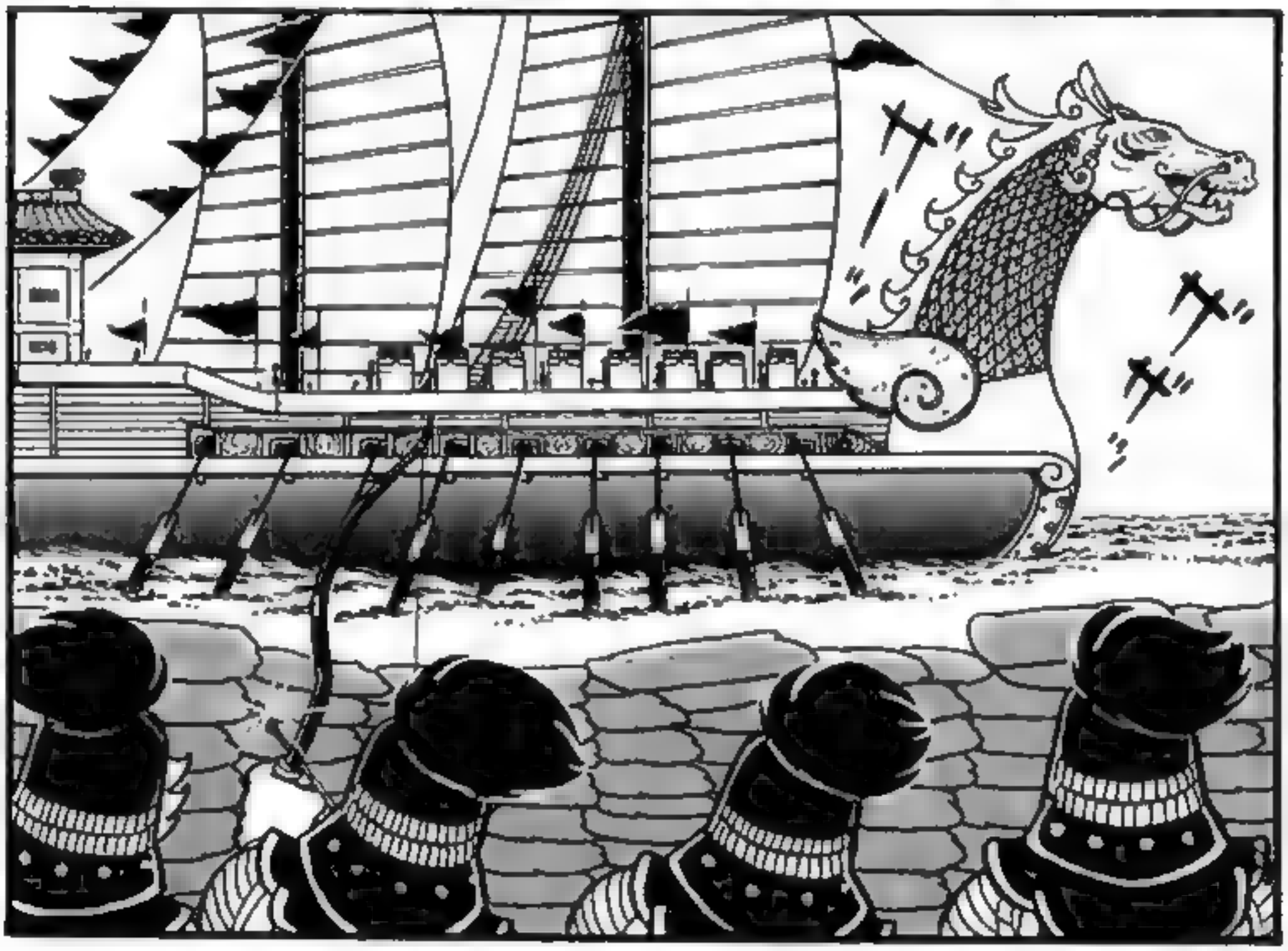






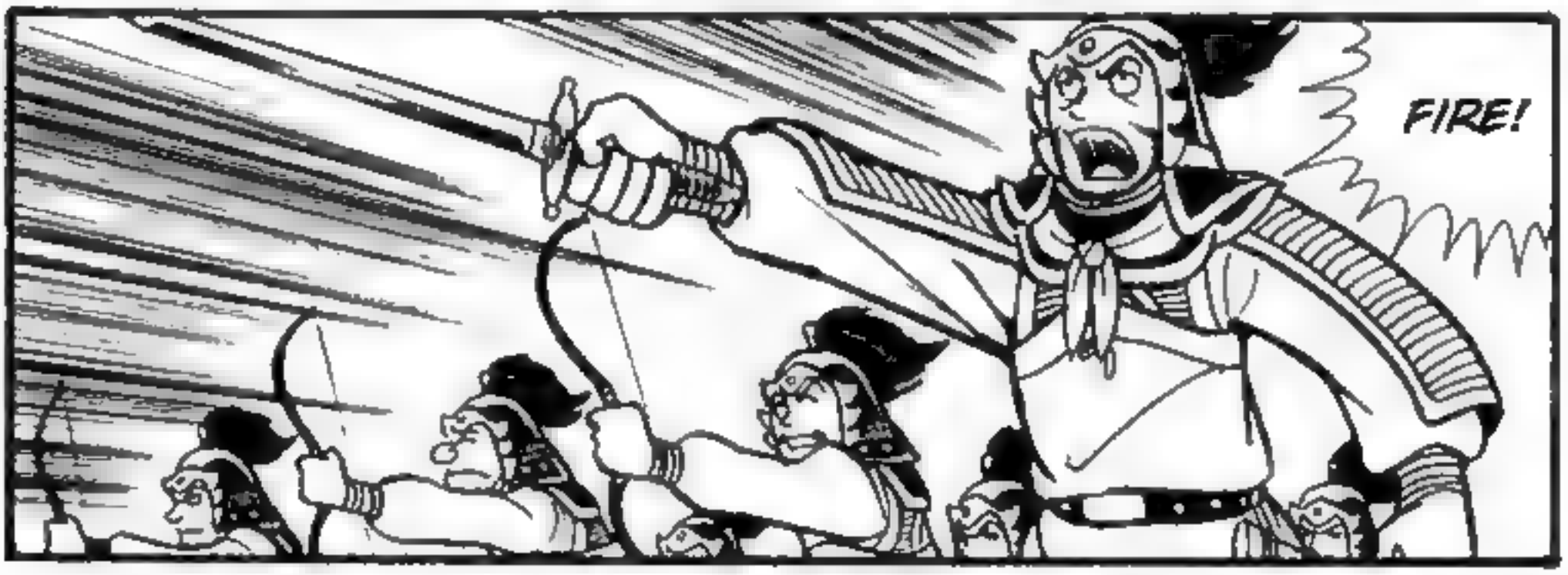
WE MUST WAIT UNTIL OUR ARROWS CAN REACH THEM.

NOT YET...
SIR, HOW MUCH LONGER SHOULD WE WAIT?

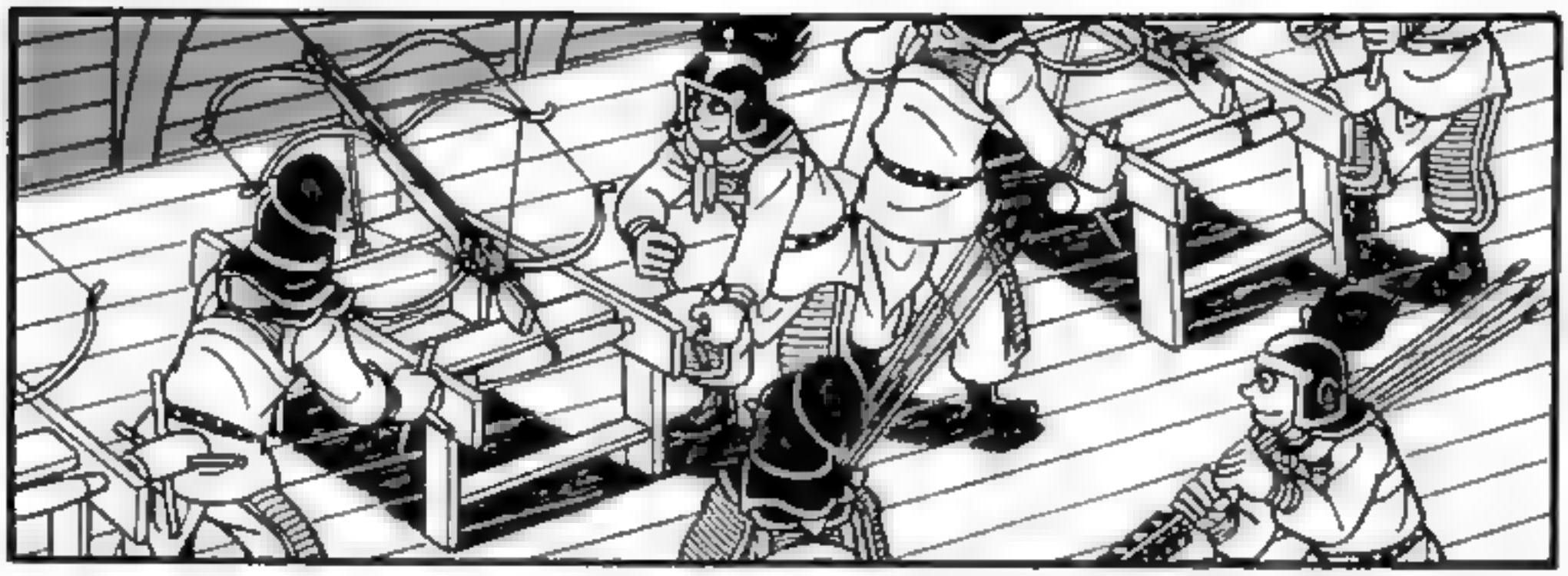


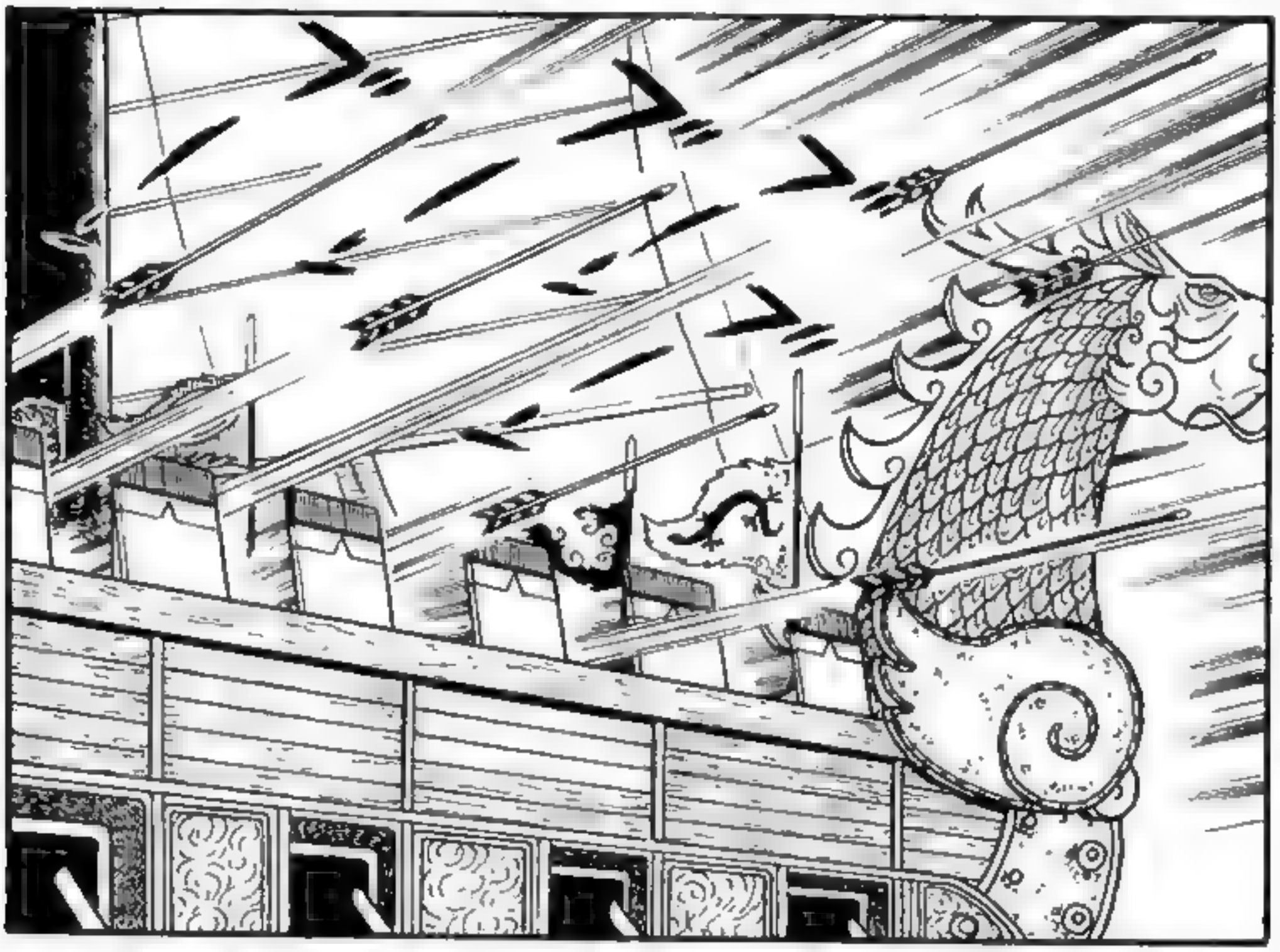
FIRE!

NOW!
FIRE!


FIRE!

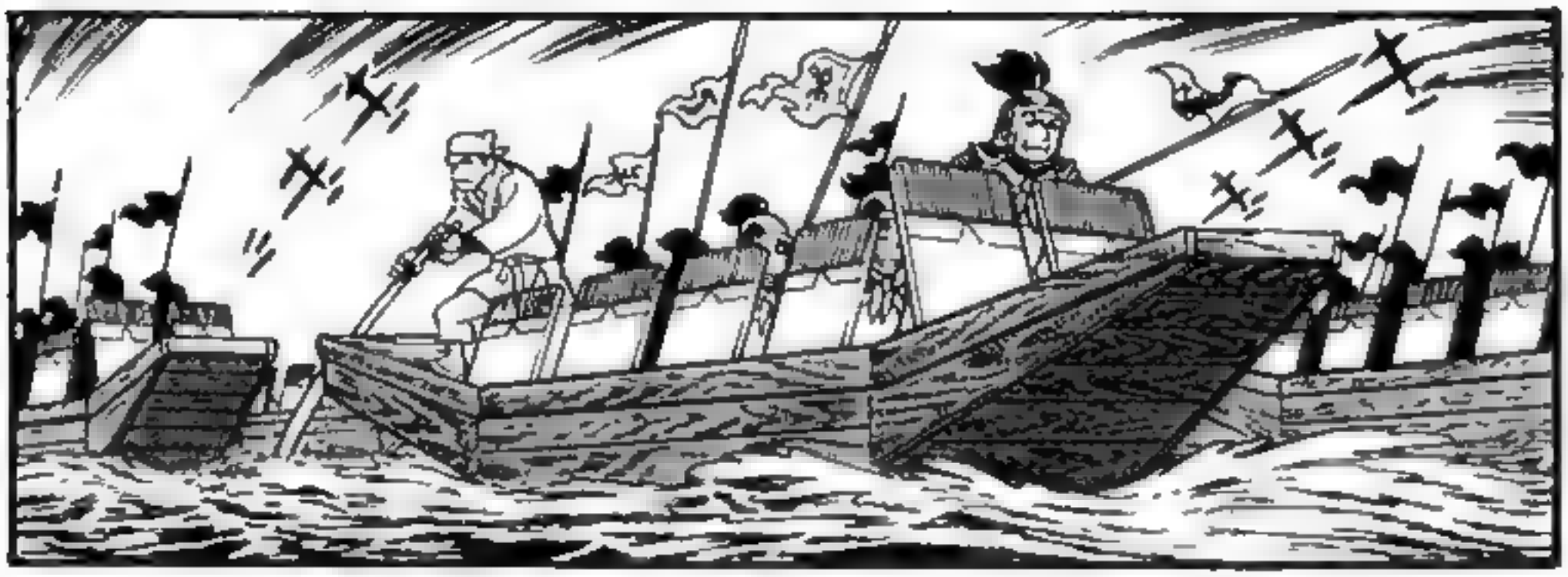
RETURN FIRE!

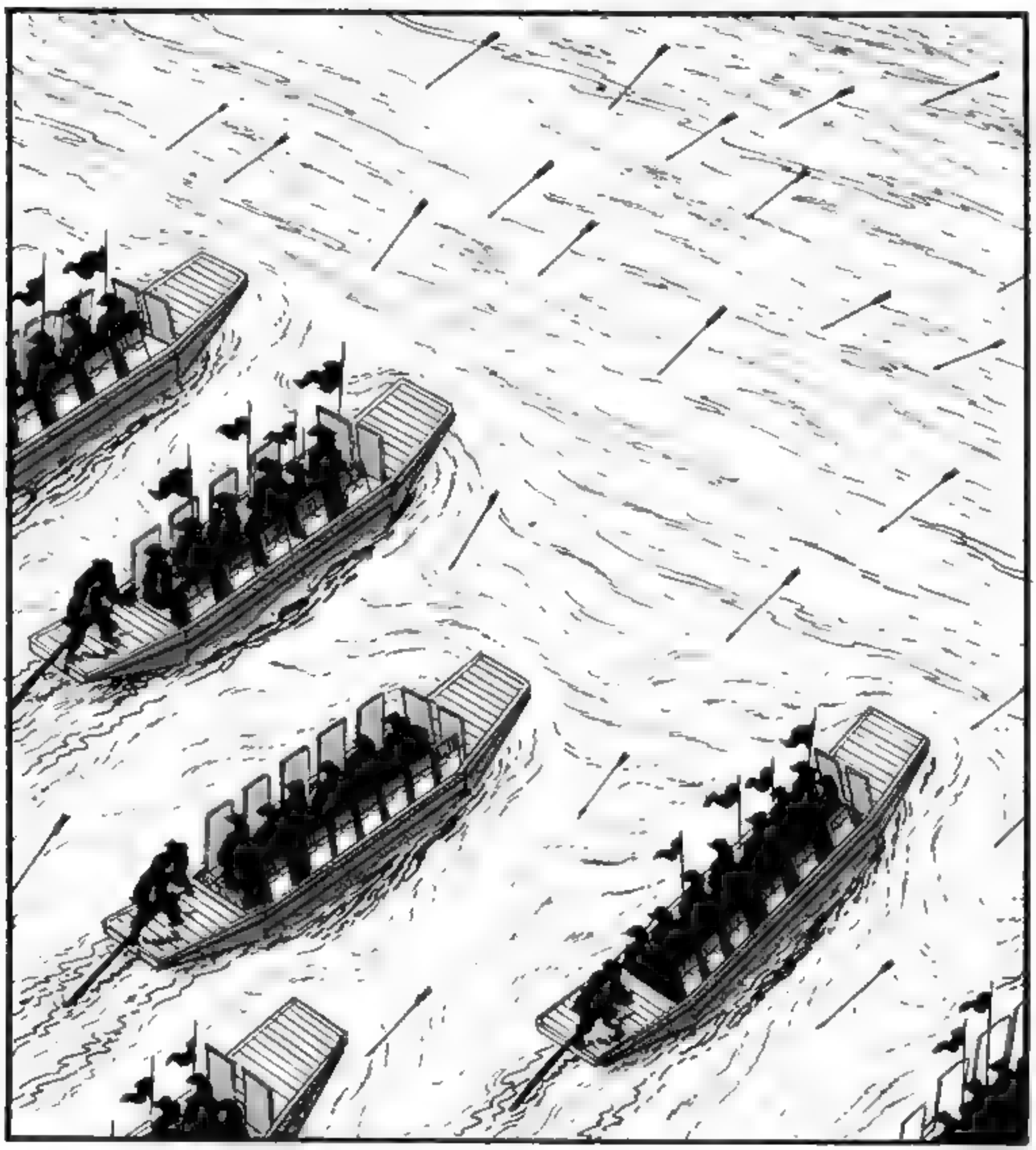




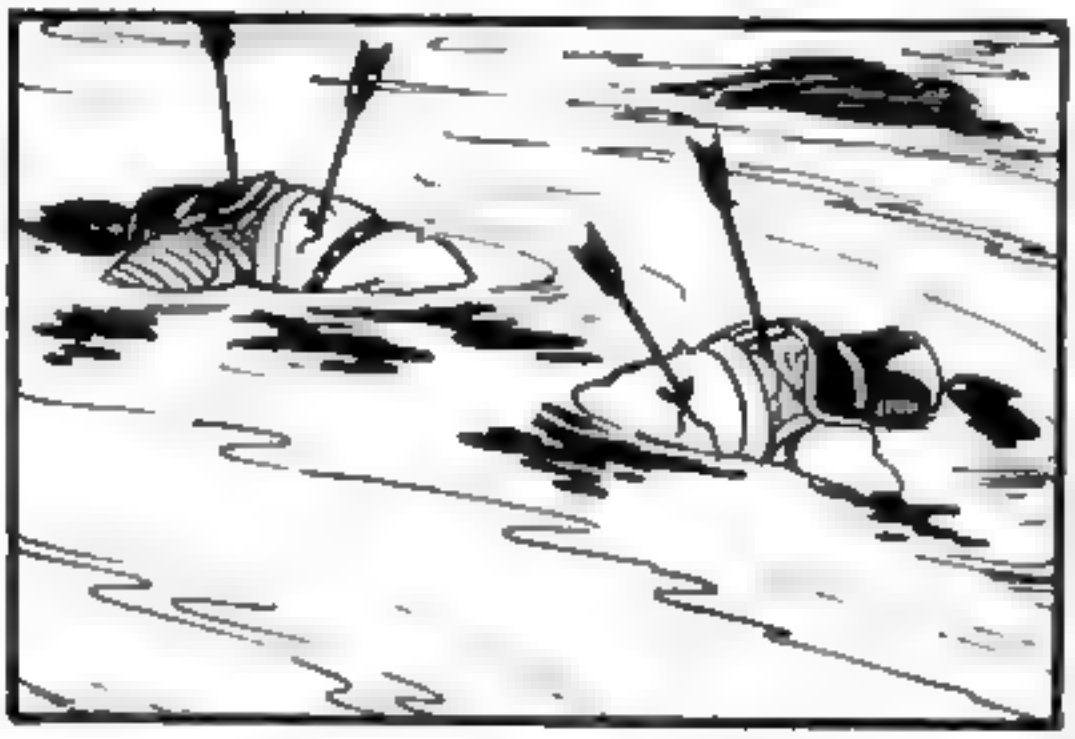
BOTH SIDES FIRED ENOUGH ARROWS TO MAKE THE SKIES PITCH BLACK.

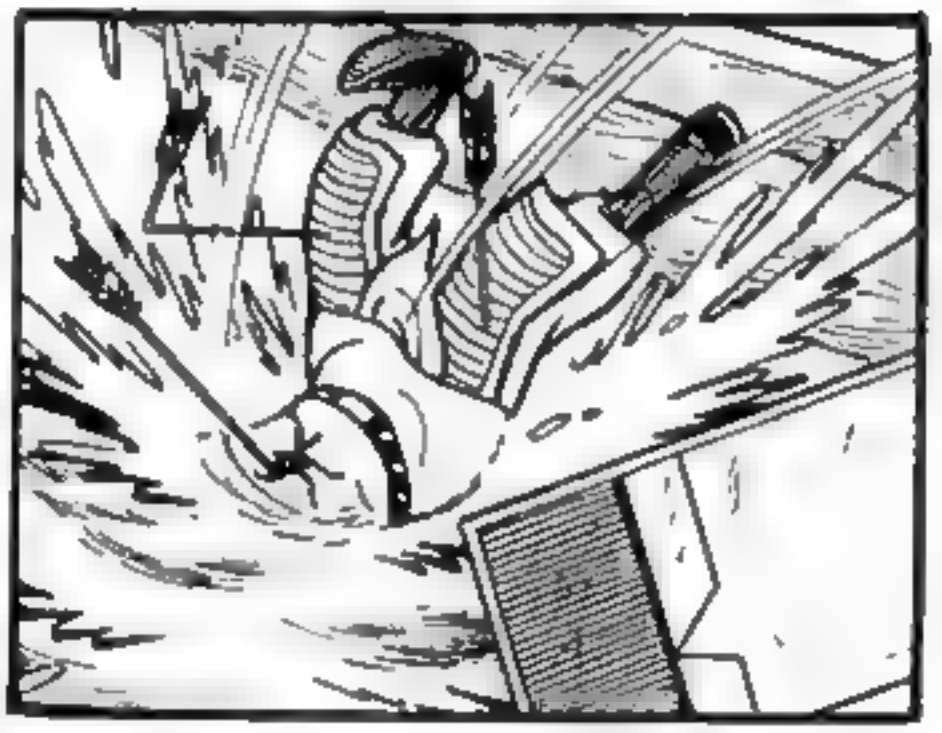
HAVE THE ELITE UNITS COMMENCE THE LANDING OPERATION.





DON'T LET THEM LAND! SHOOT MORE ARROWS!



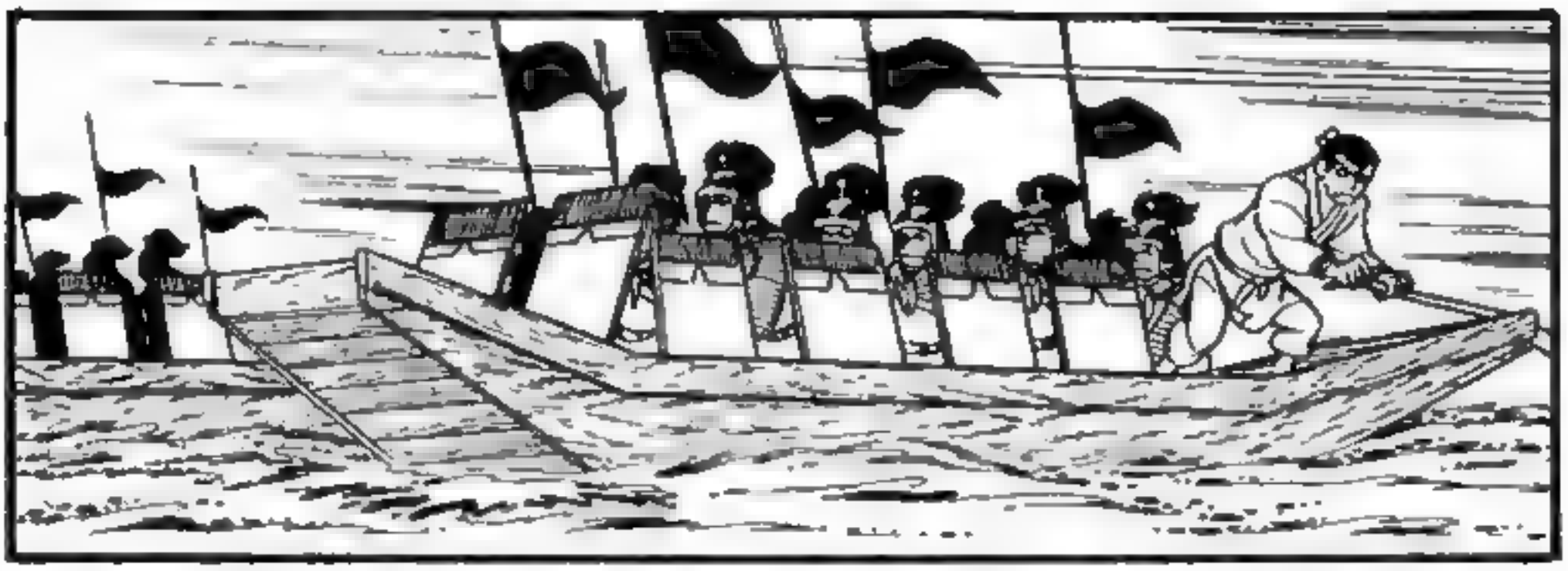


MNN...

SIR, OUR CASUALTIES WILL ONLY INCREASE AT THIS RATE.

ALRIGHT, SOUND THE SIGNAL TO PULL BACK.

ALL SHIPS MOVE BACK UNTIL WE ARE OUT OF THEIR ARCHERS' RANGE!



WE SHALL CHANGE TACTICS THEN.

YES, I KNOW.

SIR, WE CANNOT HOPE FOR A LANDING WITH THEIR BARRAGE OF ARROWS.

?

HAVE THE SMALL BOATS CARRYING A TORCH AND A SINGLE OARSMAN APPROACH THE RIVER BANK.

WE SHALL PRETEND TO BE LAUNCHING A NIGHT RAID EVERY NIGHT FROM TONIGHT TO MAKE THEM WASTE THEIR ARROWS.

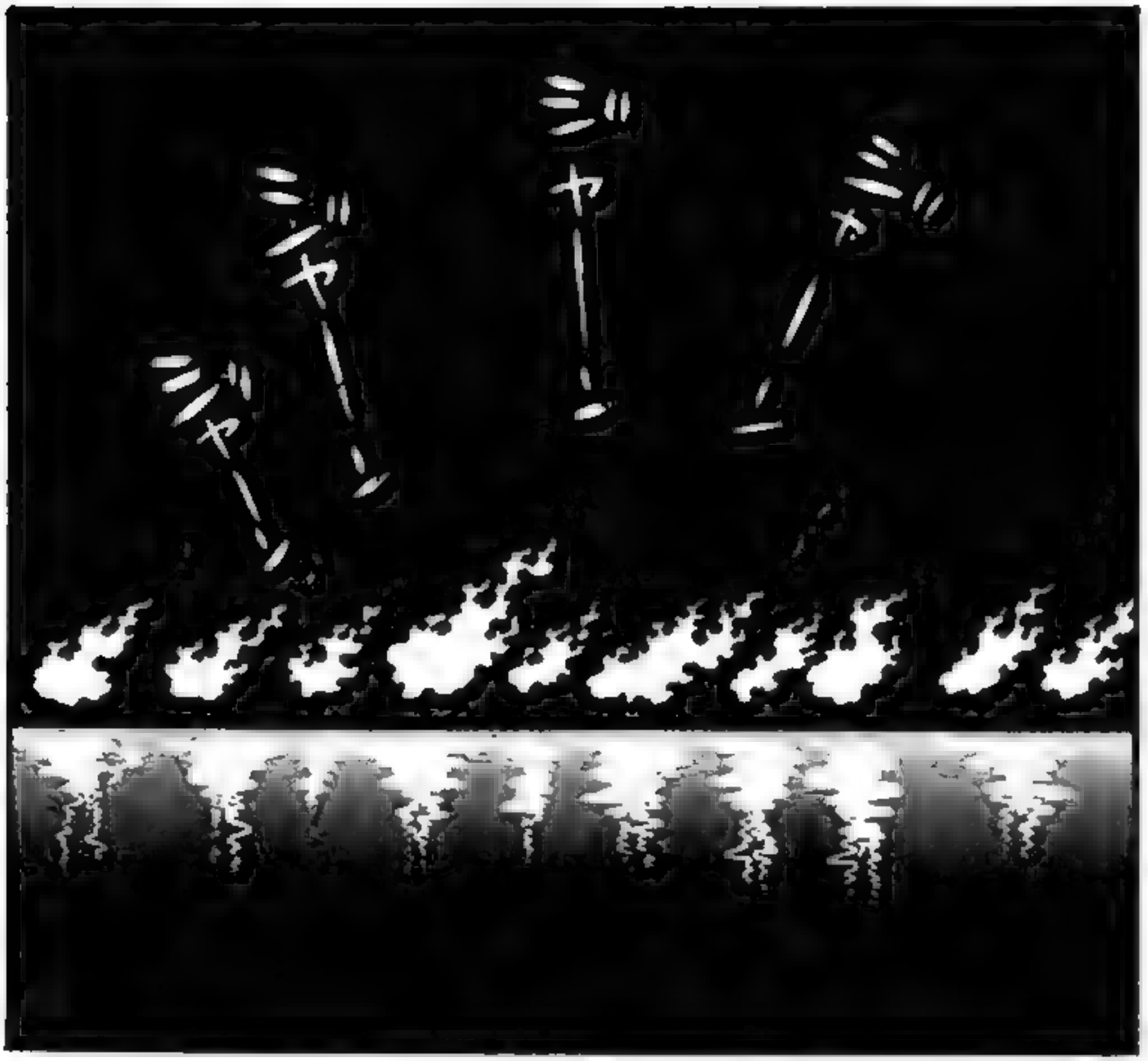
WHAT, DO YOU NOT UNDER-STAND WHAT I MEAN BY THIS?

GOOD, CARRY THE PLAN OUT RIGHT AWAY THEN.

A MOST INGENIOUS IDEA, SIR. I AM SURE IT WILL SUCCEED.

AHH!

I-IT'S A NIGHT RAID!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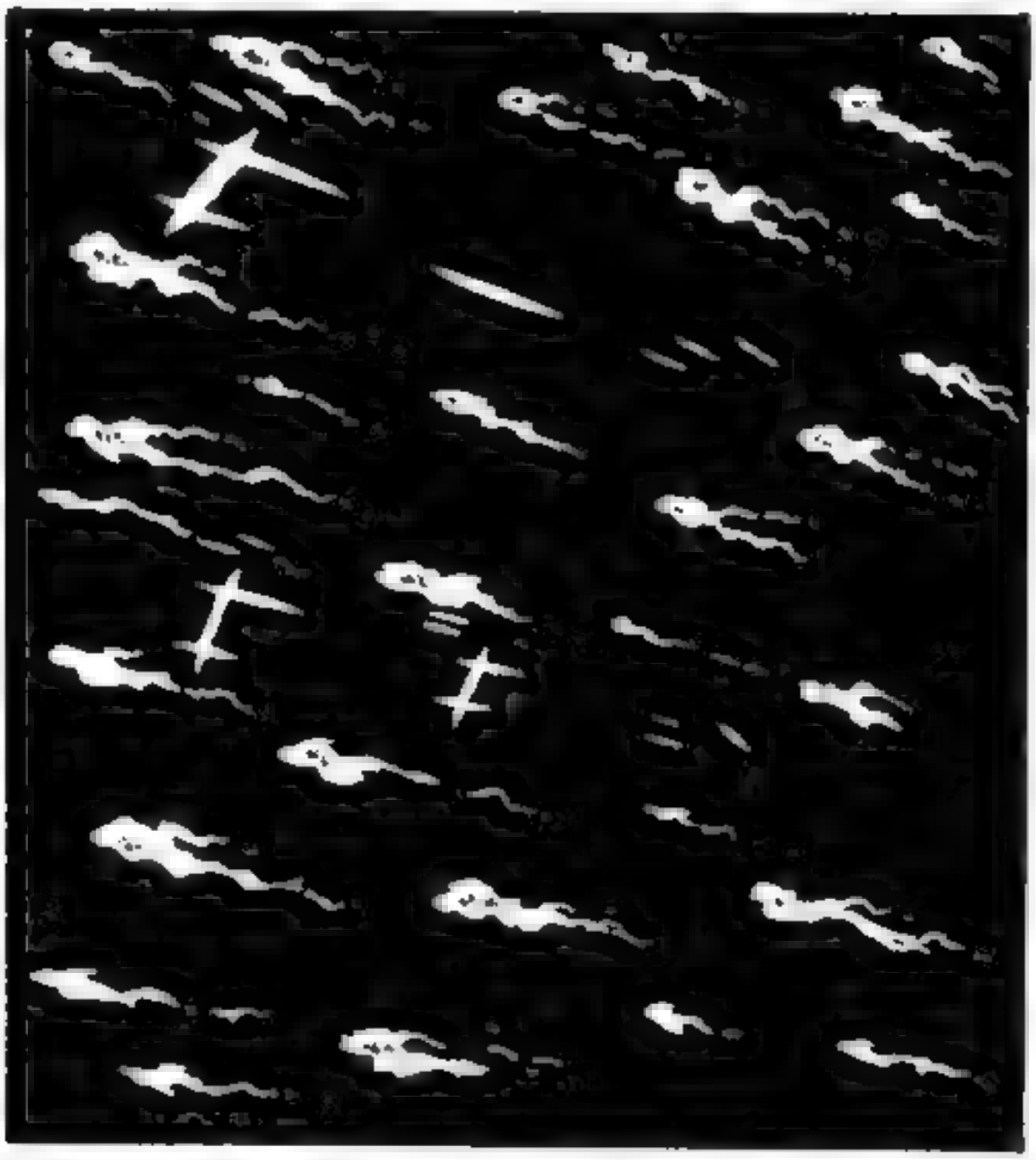
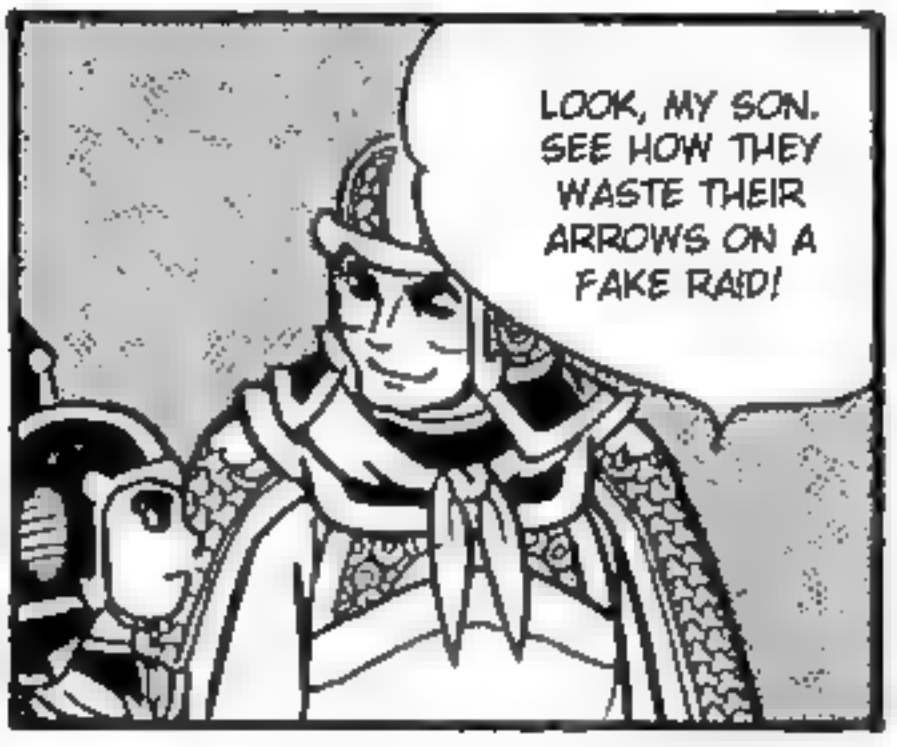
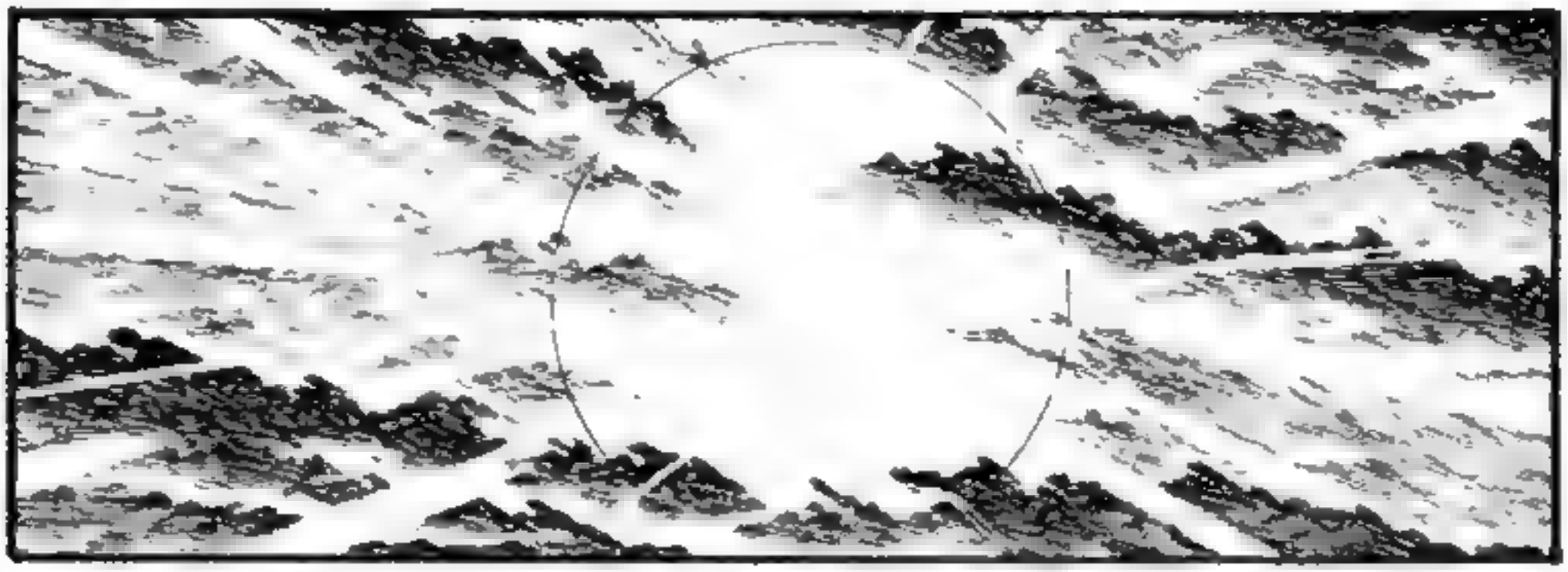
IT'S A RAID!

SHOOT THE FIRE ARROWS!



HAHA, THEY'VE BEEN FOOLED COMPLETELY.

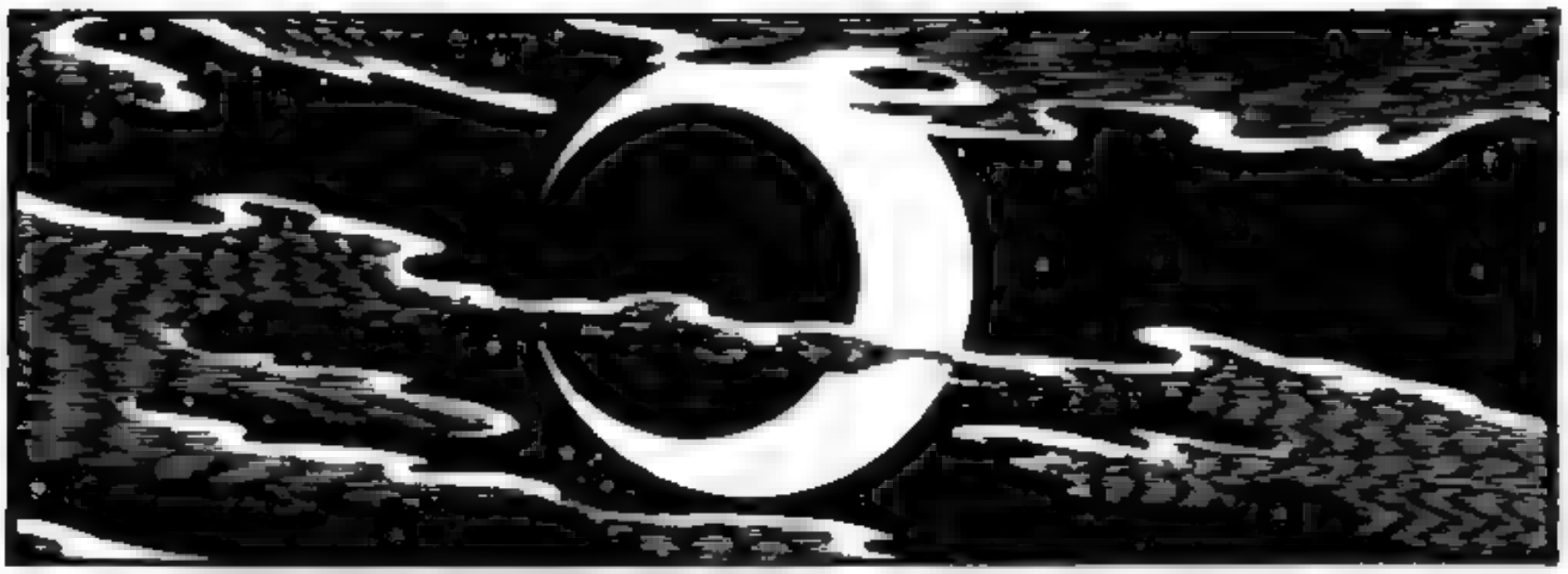

LOOK, MY SON. SEE HOW THEY WASTE THEIR ARROWS ON A FAKE RAID!



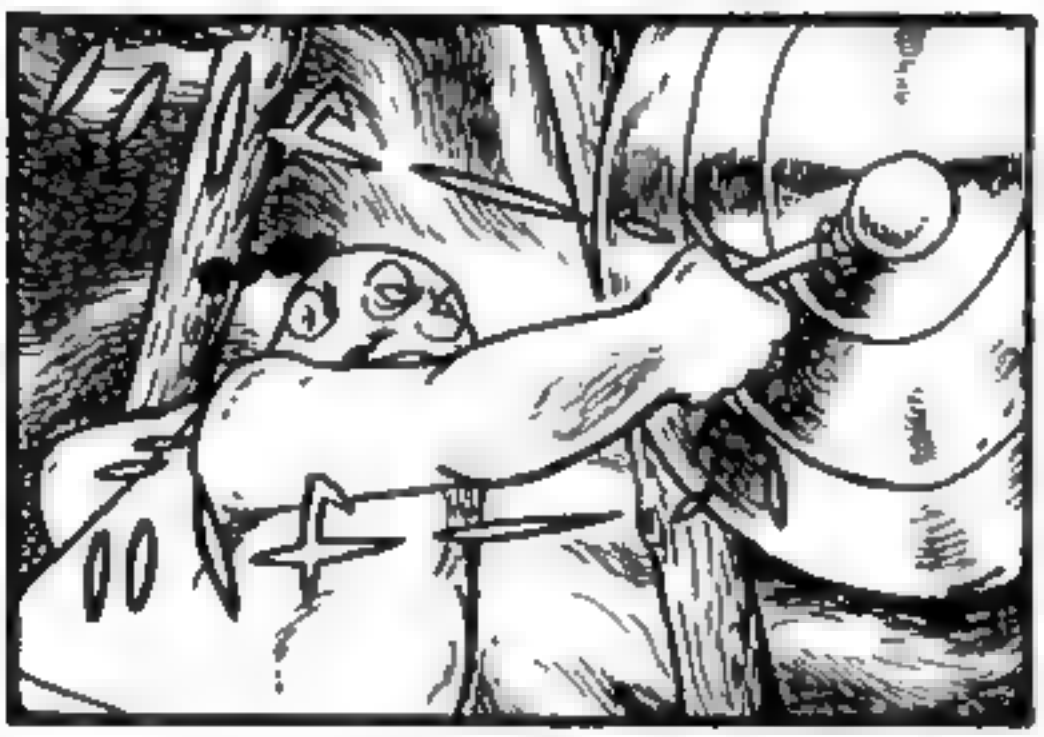
HAVE SUN JIAN'S FLEET SHOWN ANY MOVEMENTS?
NO, SIR.

YAWWNN

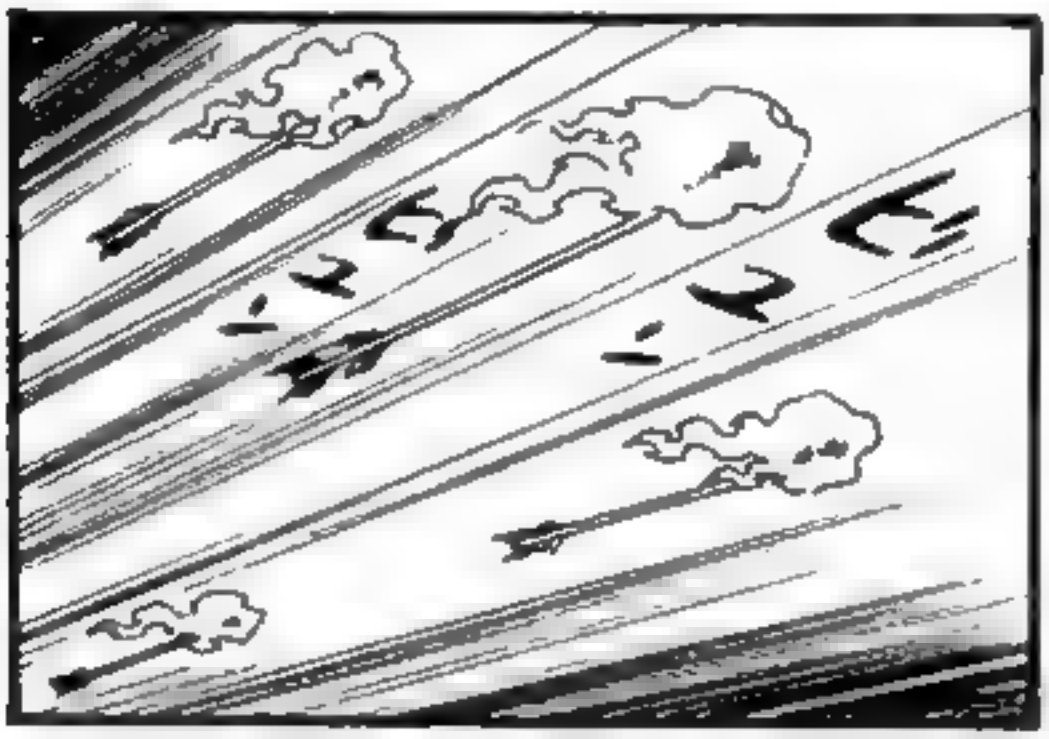
HMM, I SEE... BUT EVEN SO, WE MUSTN'T LET OUR GUARD DOWN FOR THEY MAY ATTACK AGAIN AT ANY TIME.
THEY ARE MERELY WAITING OUTSIDE OUR ARCHERS' RANGE.

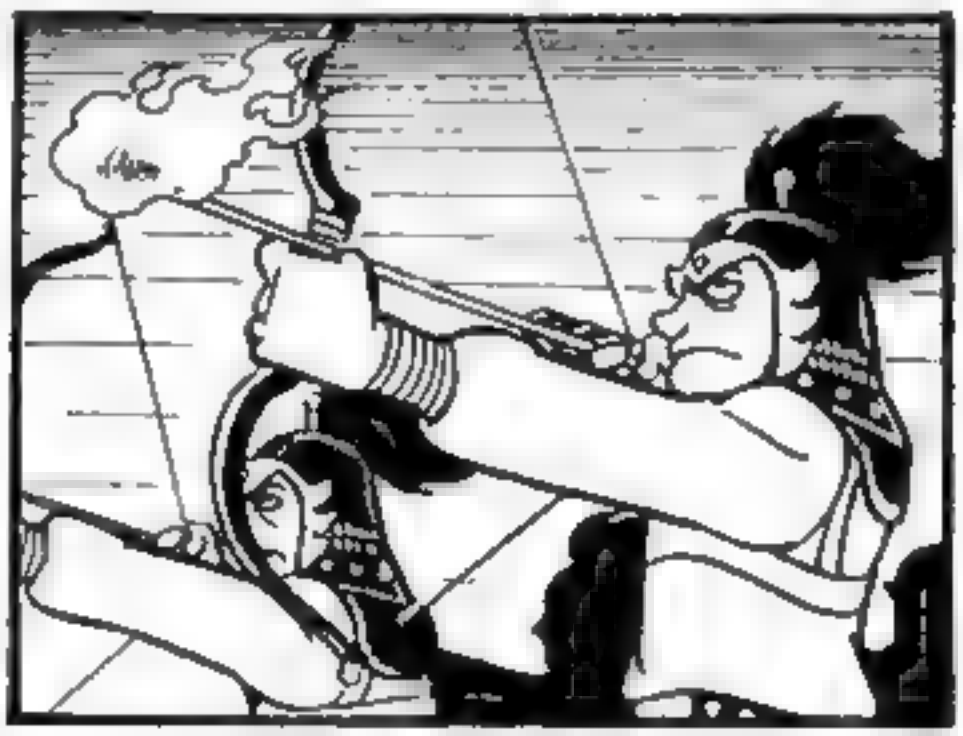


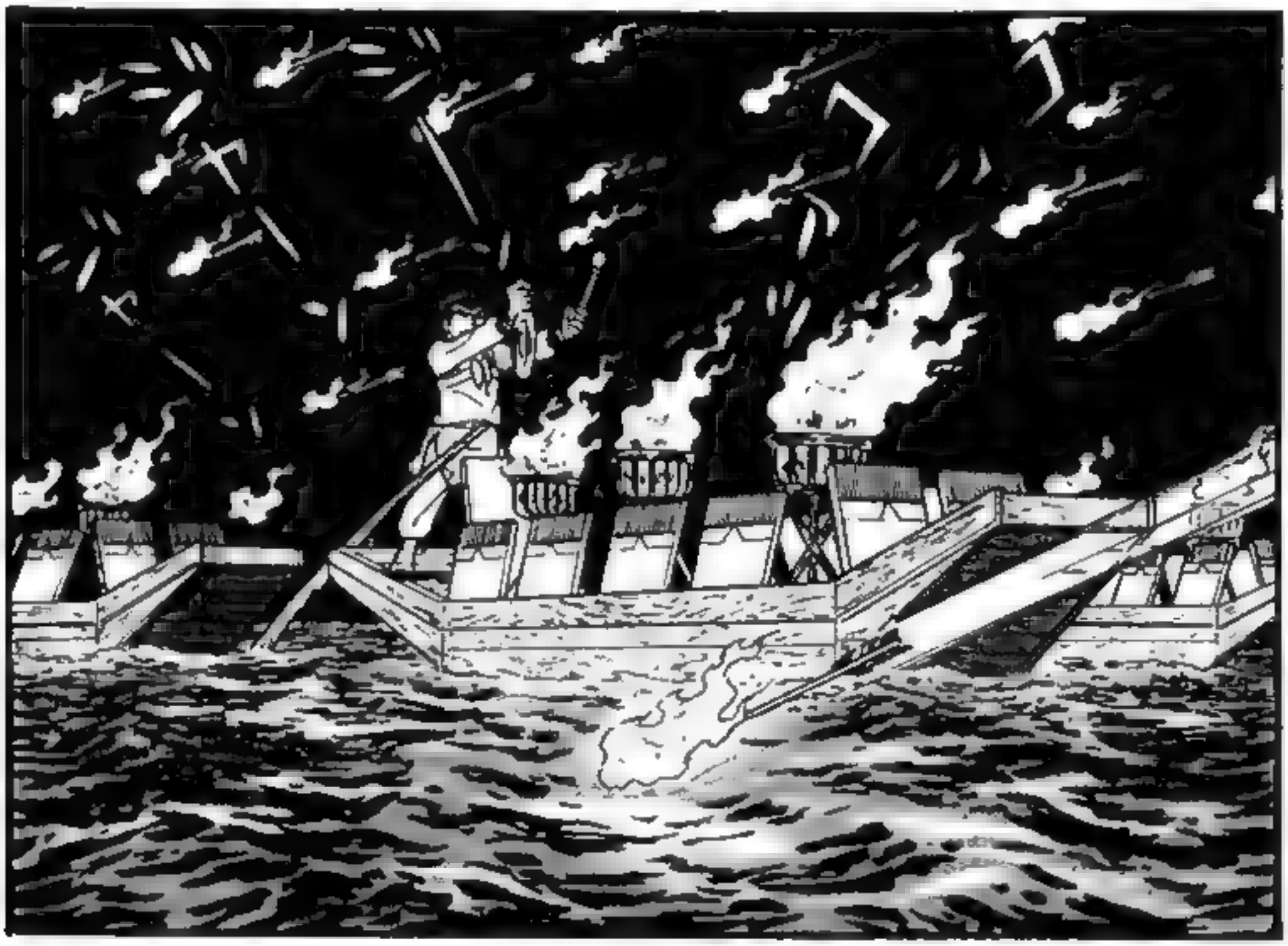
AHH!



IT'S ANOTHER NIGHT RAID!







MNN...
ZZZZ....

WAKE UP! JUST WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF SUN JIAN WERE TO ATTACK THIS VERY INSTANT!?

A MAN SHOULD KNOW NO FATIGUE ON A BATTLEFIELD.

GENERAL, IT IS ALREADY THE 7TH NIGHT SINCE THEY BEGAN THE RAIDS. THE MEN ARE ALL EXHAUSTED FROM LACK OF SLEEP.

AFTER 7 CONTINUOUS NIGHT RAIDS, OUR SUPPLY OF ARROWS IS BEGINNING TO RUN LOW.

WHAT!

WHAT IS IT?

GENERAL, I HAVE SOMETHING TO REPORT.

MMM...

I'M AFRAID WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO REPEL THEIR ATTACKS FOR MUCH LONGER.

GENERAL!

THIS WAY, SIR.

WHAT IS IT?

THERE IS SOMETHING THAT SIR SHOULD SEE RIGHT AWAY!

HMM?

ONE OF THE ENEMY BOATS FROM THE RAID DRIFTED ON OUR SHORE.

IT SEEMS THAT ONLY A SINGLE OARSMEN AND SOME TORCHES WERE ON THESE ENEMY BOATS.

JUDGING BY THE AMOUNT OF BLOODSTAINS AND THE ARROWS, I BELIEVE SO, SIR.

YOU MEAN TO TELL ME OUR ENEMIES WERE BOATS CONTAINING ONLY A SINGLE OARSMAN!?

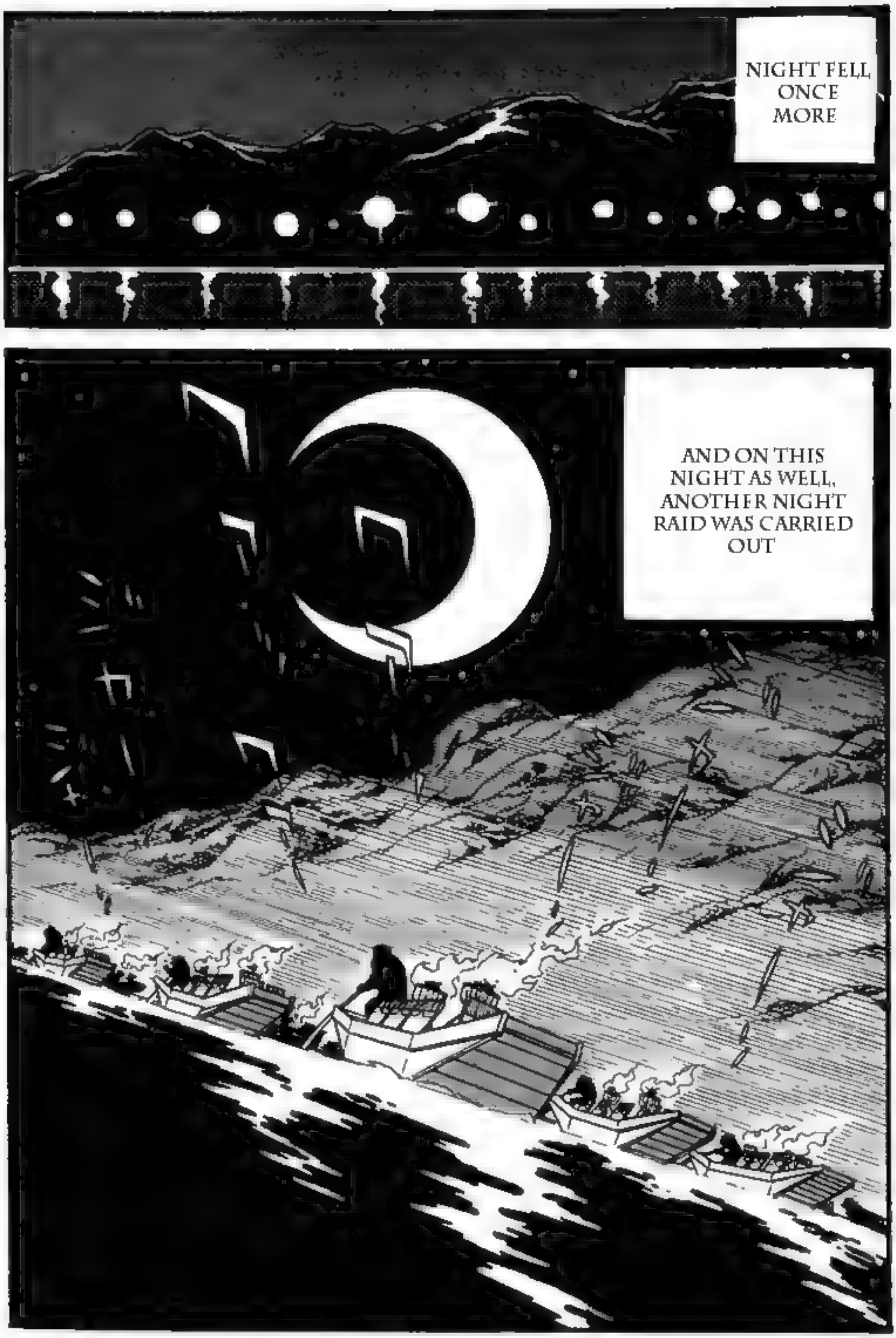
MOST LIKELY, SIR...

SO SUN JIAN WAS ONLY PRETENDING TO LAUNCH A RAID TO TIRE OUR MEN OUT AND WASTE OUR ARROWS...?

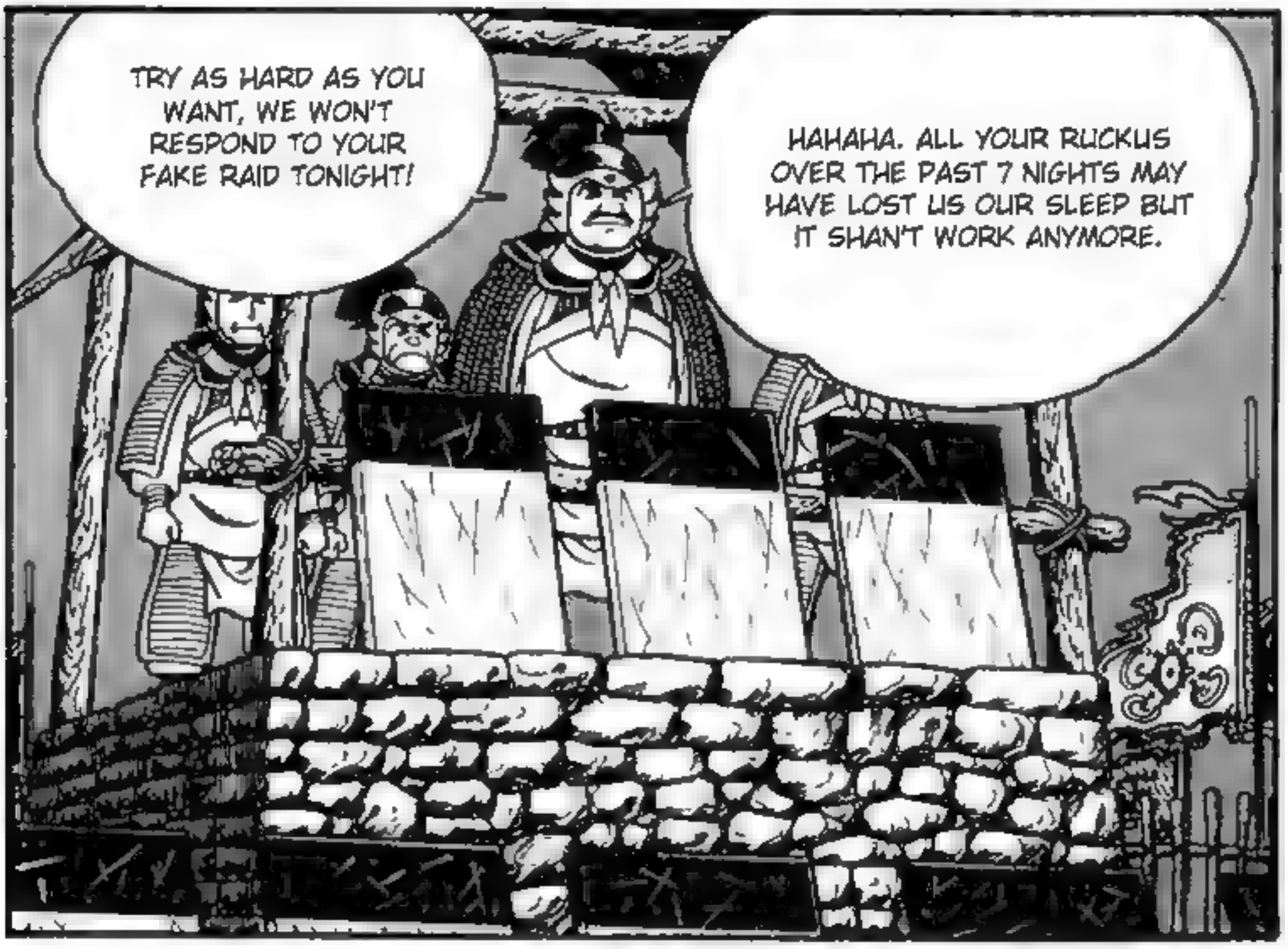
BUT IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN I HAVE A PLAN OF MY OWN...

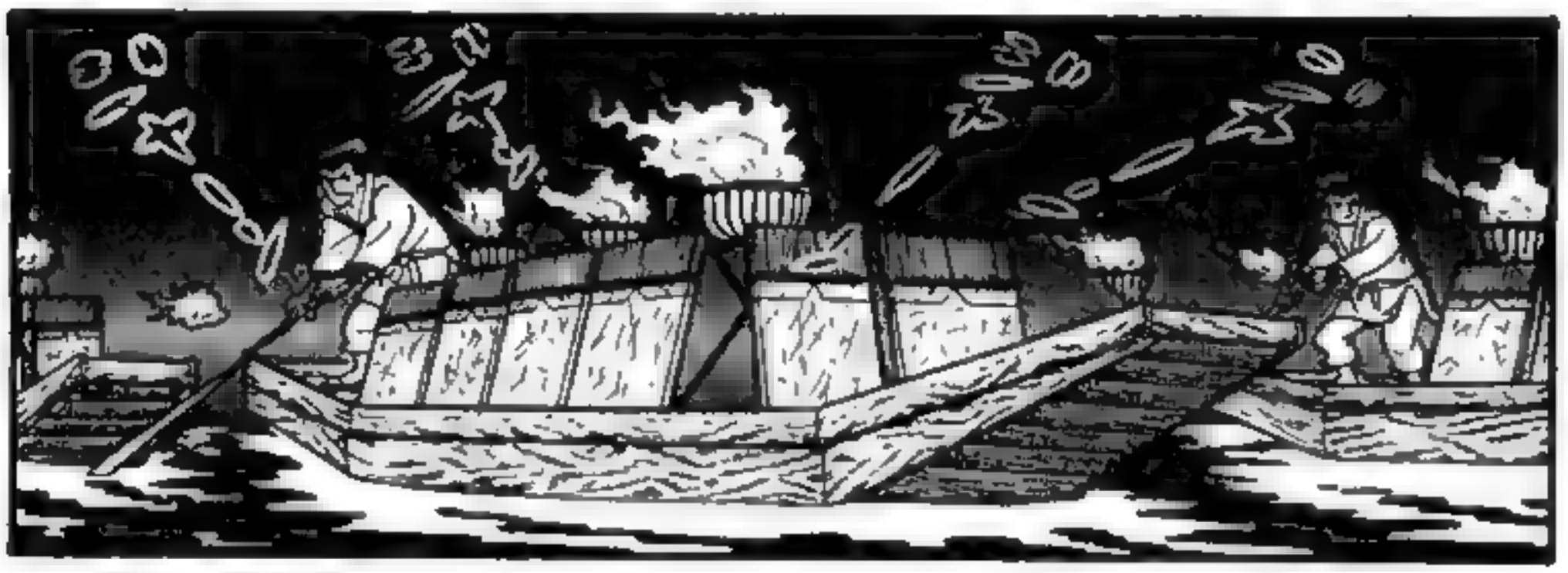
DAMN, WE'VE BEEN HAD!

CONTINUE ON WITH YOUR LITTLE SHOW, SUN JIAN! WE SHALL LEISURELY SIT BACK AND WASTE NO FURTHER ARROWS.


NIGHT FELL ONCE MORE
AND ON THIS NIGHT AS WELL, ANOTHER NIGHT RAID WAS CARRIED OUT

BOOM


TRY AS HARD AS YOU WANT, WE WON'T RESPOND TO YOUR FAKE RAID TONIGHT!
HAHAHA. ALL YOUR RUCKUS OVER THE PAST 7 NIGHTS MAY HAVE LOST US OUR SLEEP BUT IT SHAN'T WORK ANYMORE.


BOOM
BOOM
BOOM

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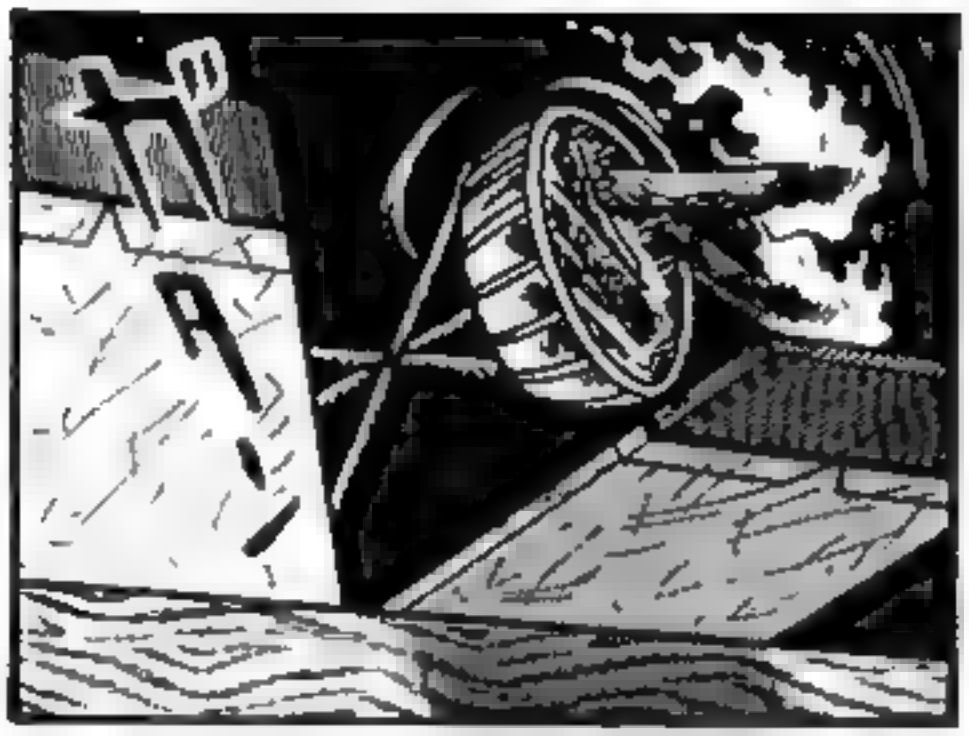
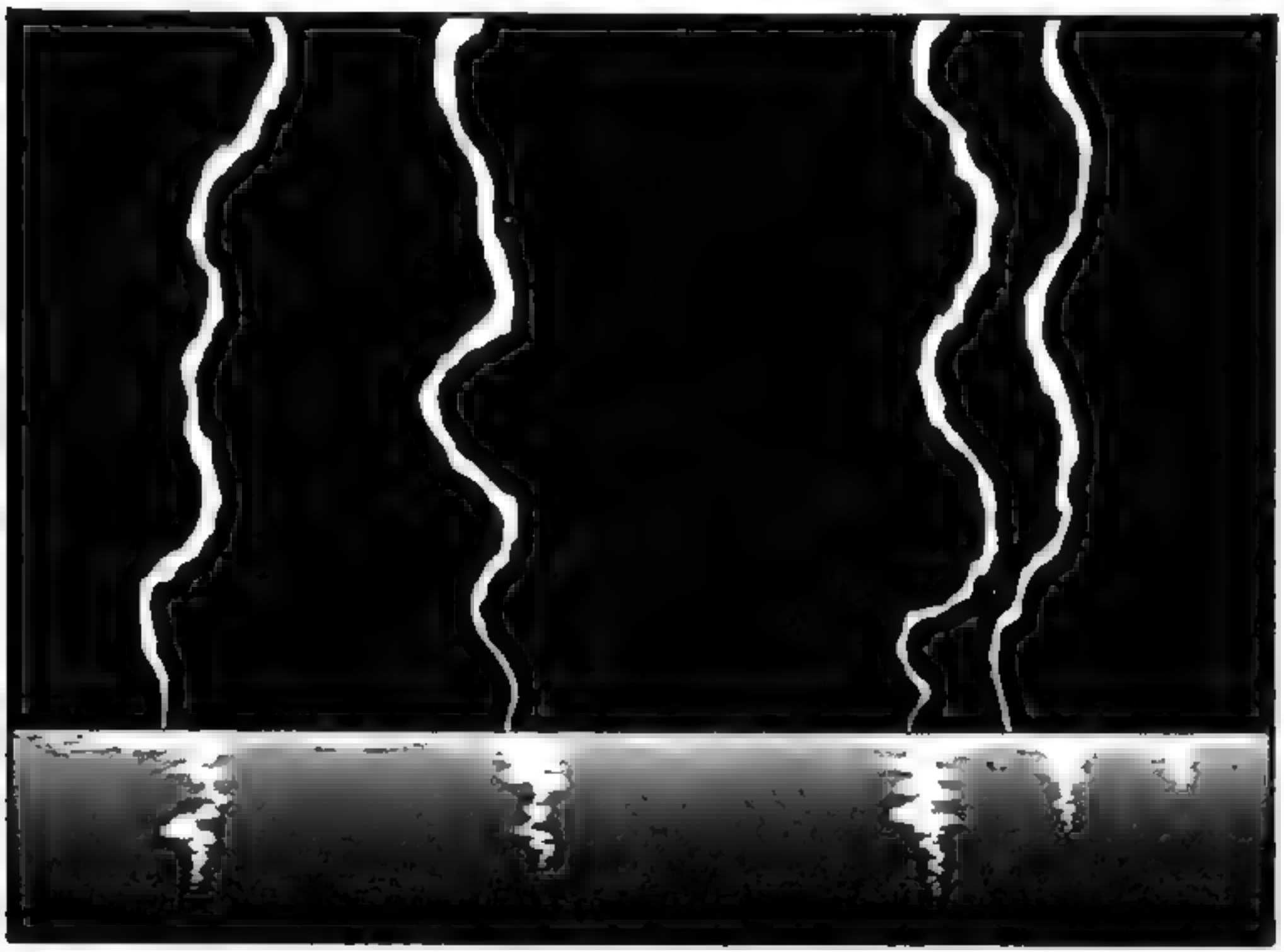
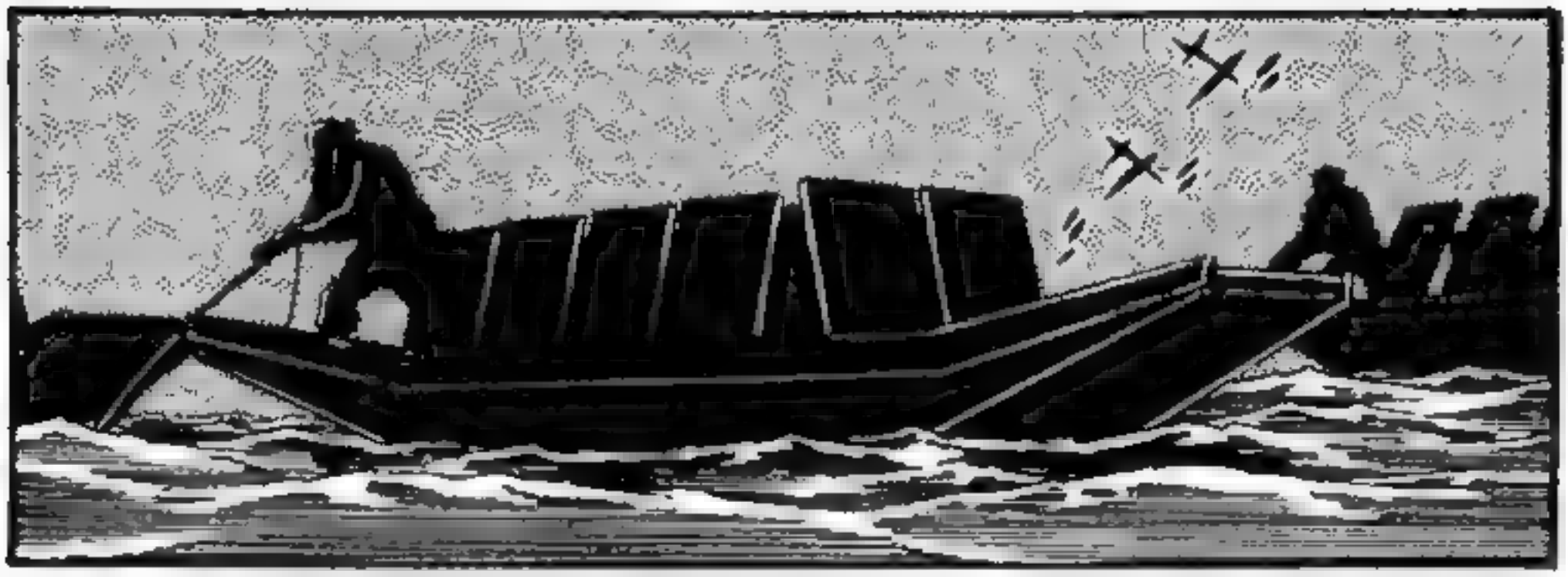




WHAT!?

HUH?



IT'S THE REAL THING TONIGHT!

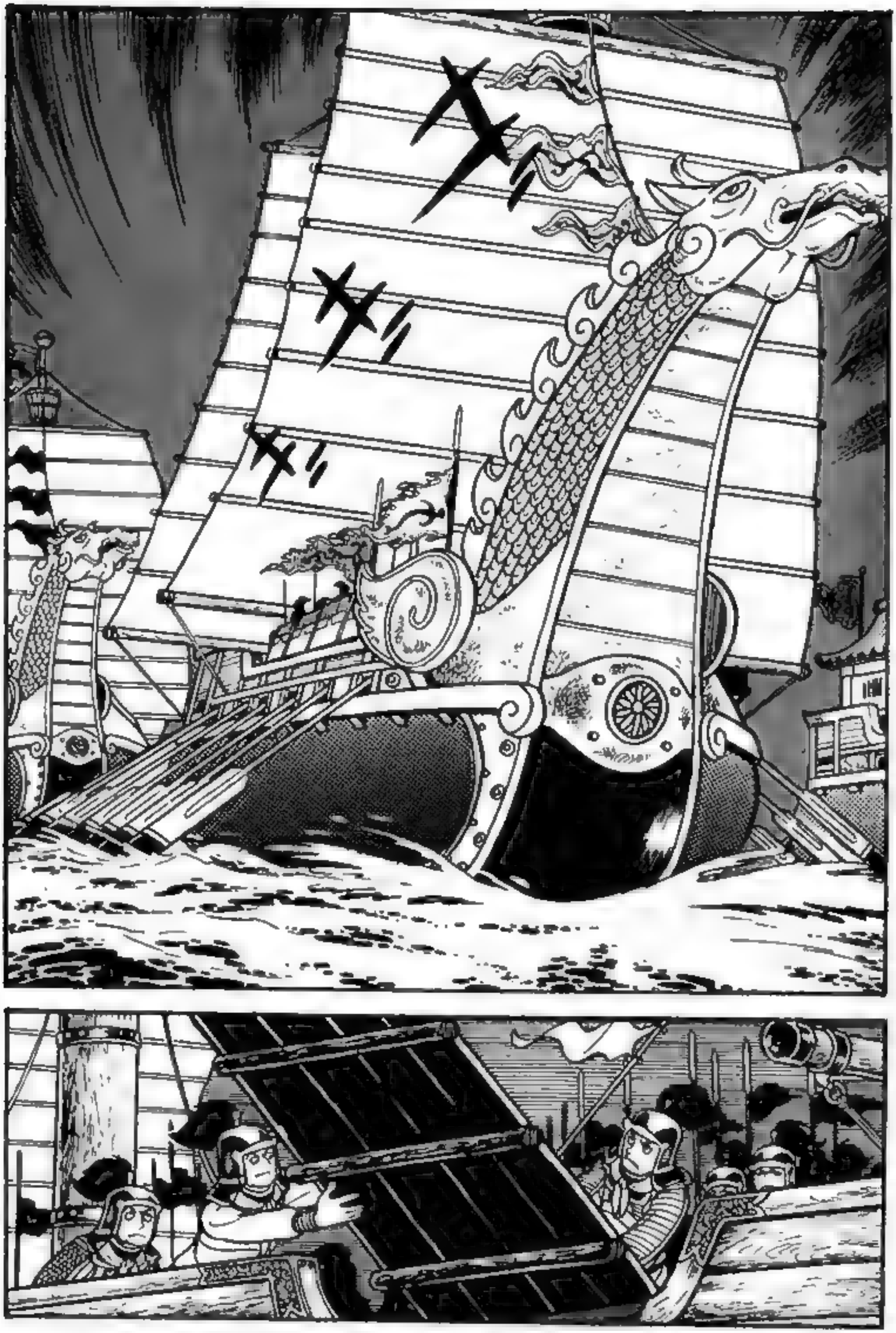
AHHH!

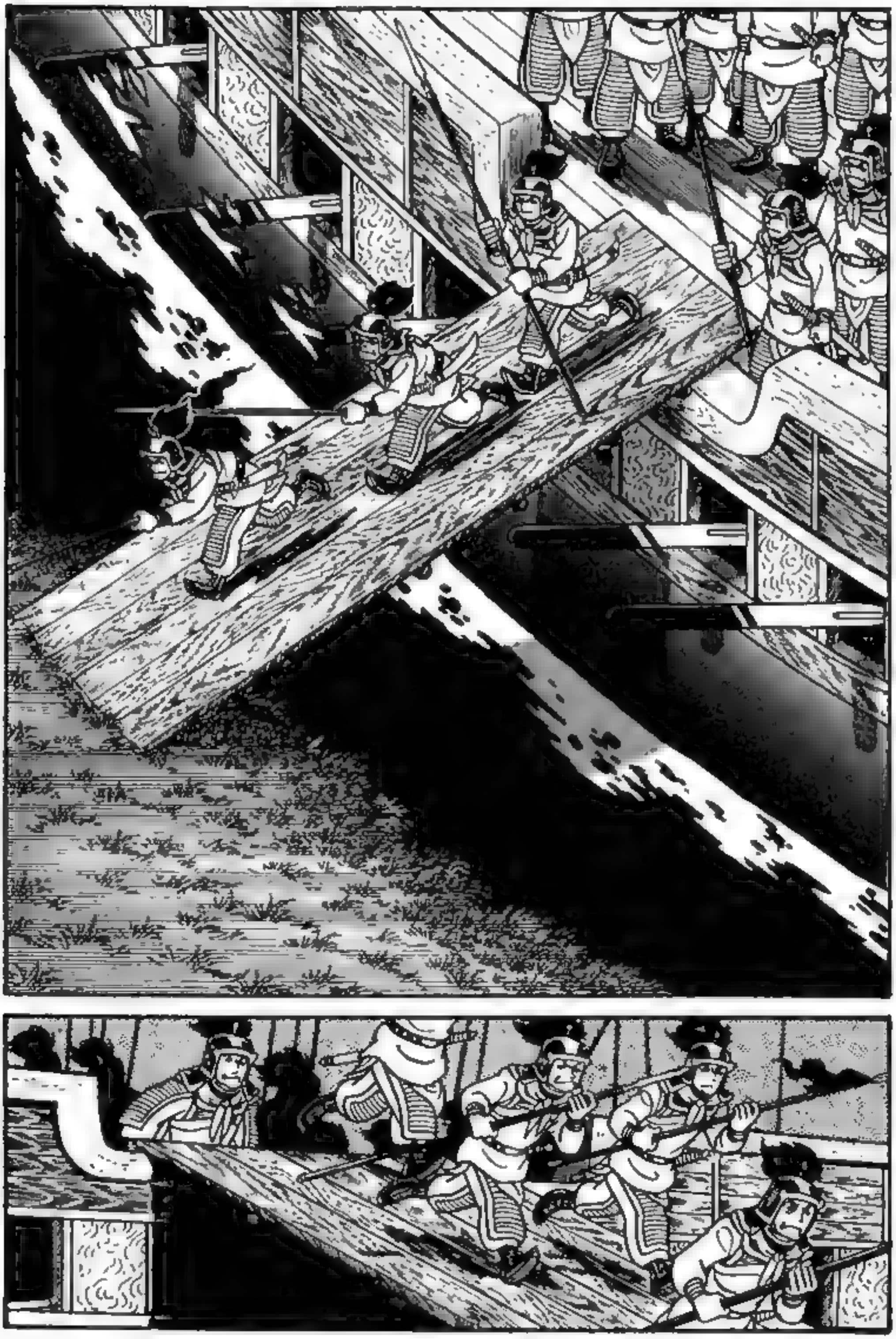
ATTACK! DRIVE THE ENEMIES BACK!

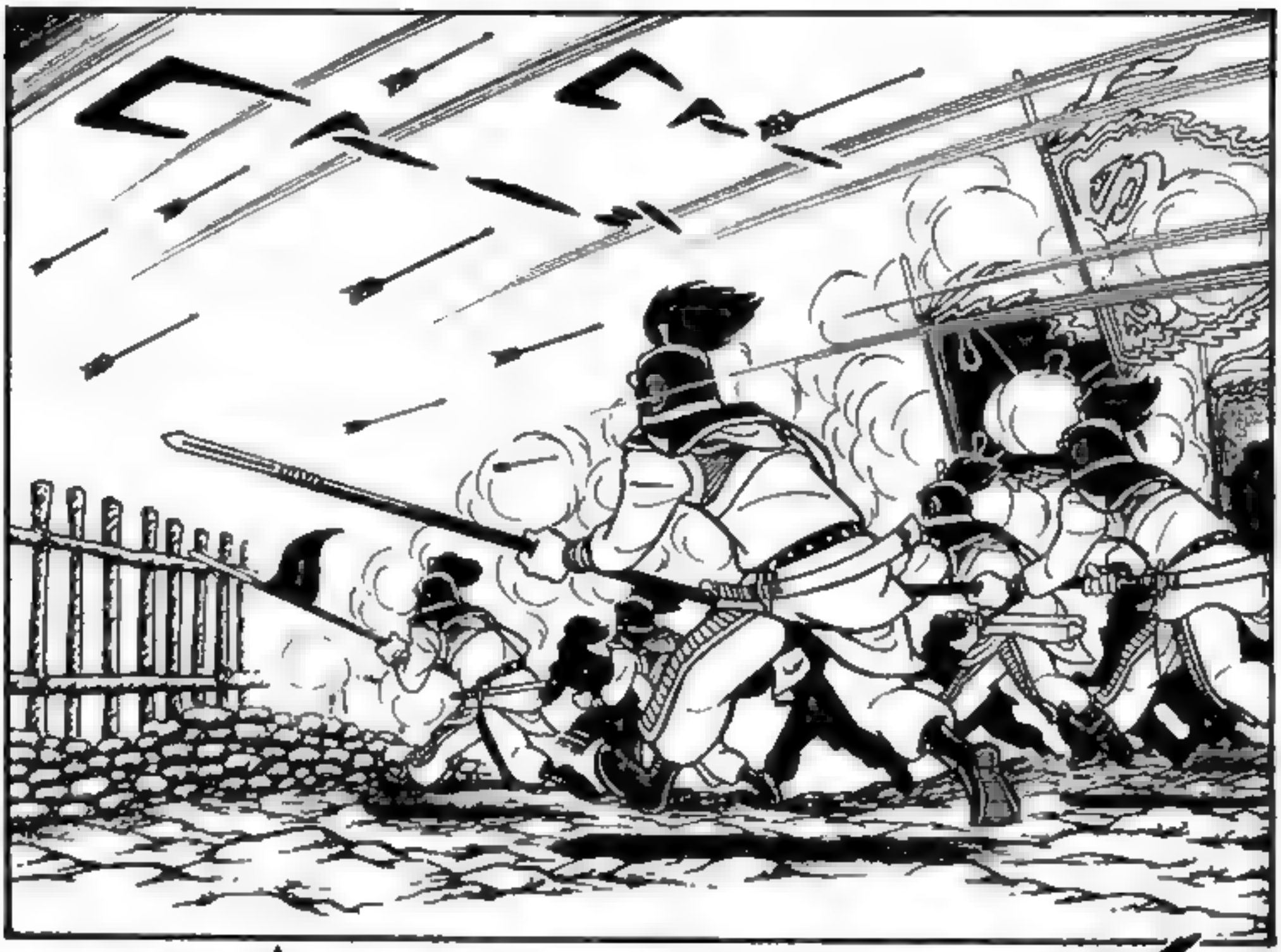
ALL SHIPS APPROACH THE SHORE AND LAND AS WELL!

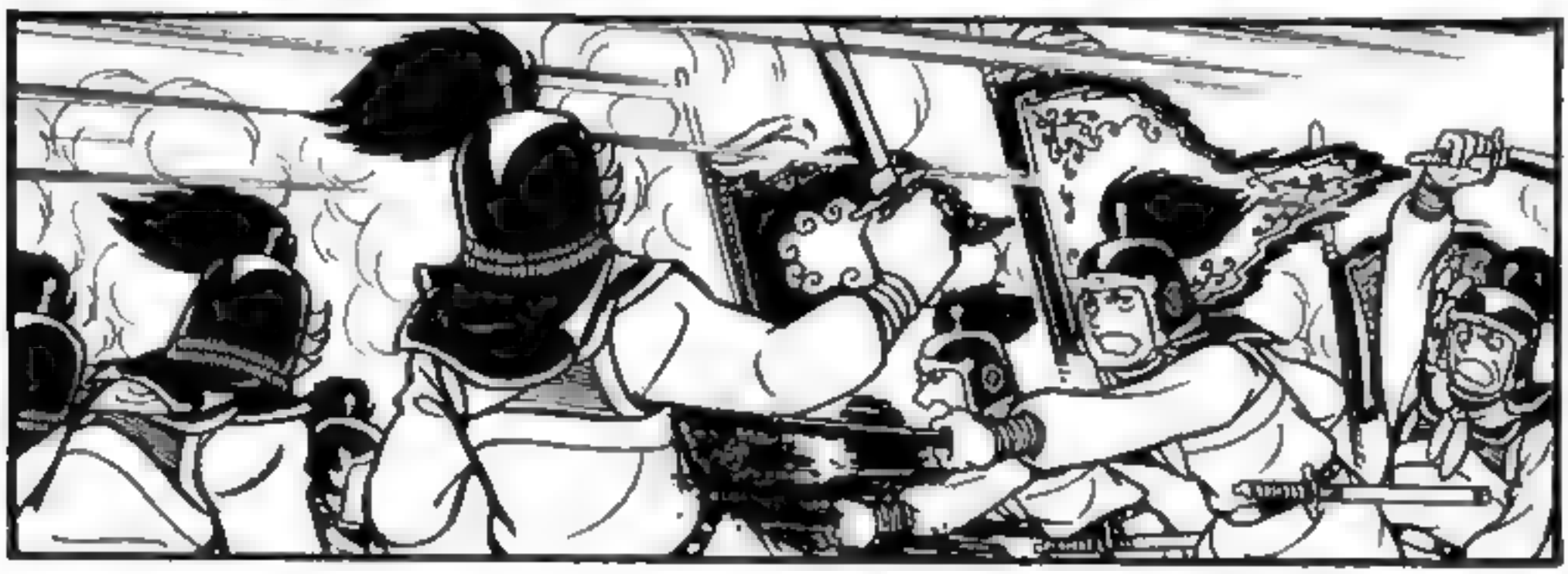
HAHAHA, MAGNIFICENT!

SIR, IT SEEMS THAT THE LANDING WAS A SUCCESS!







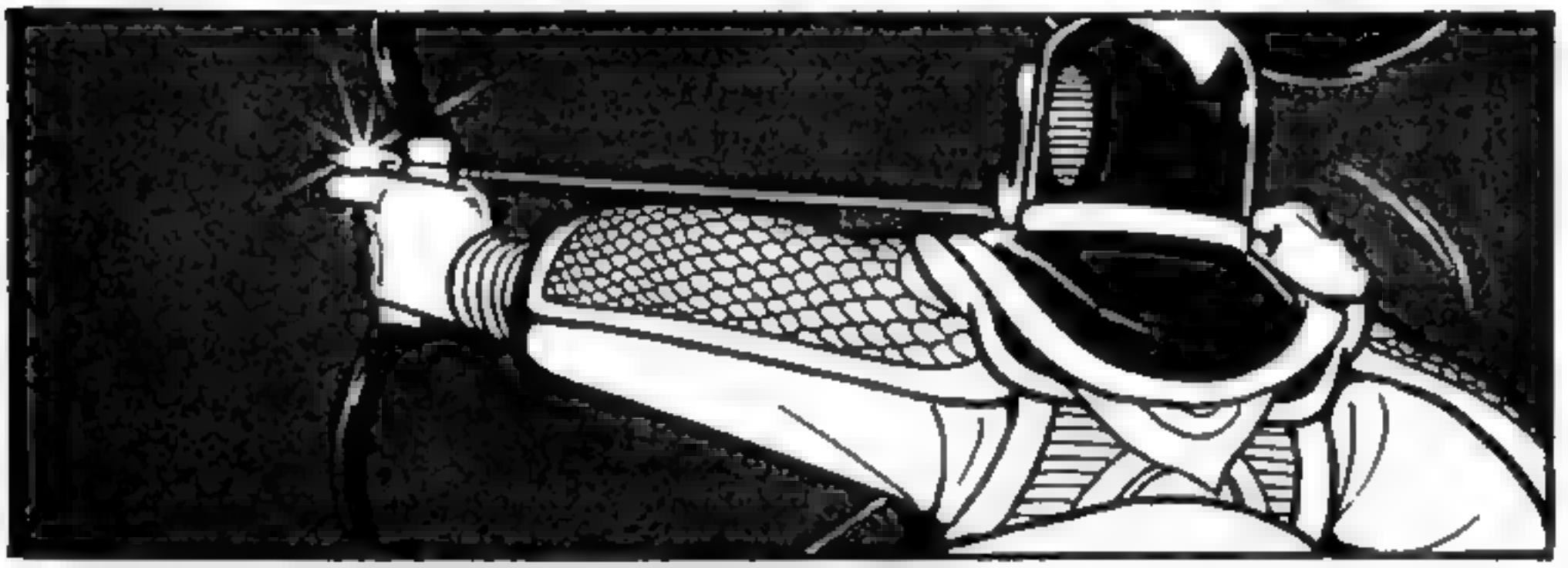


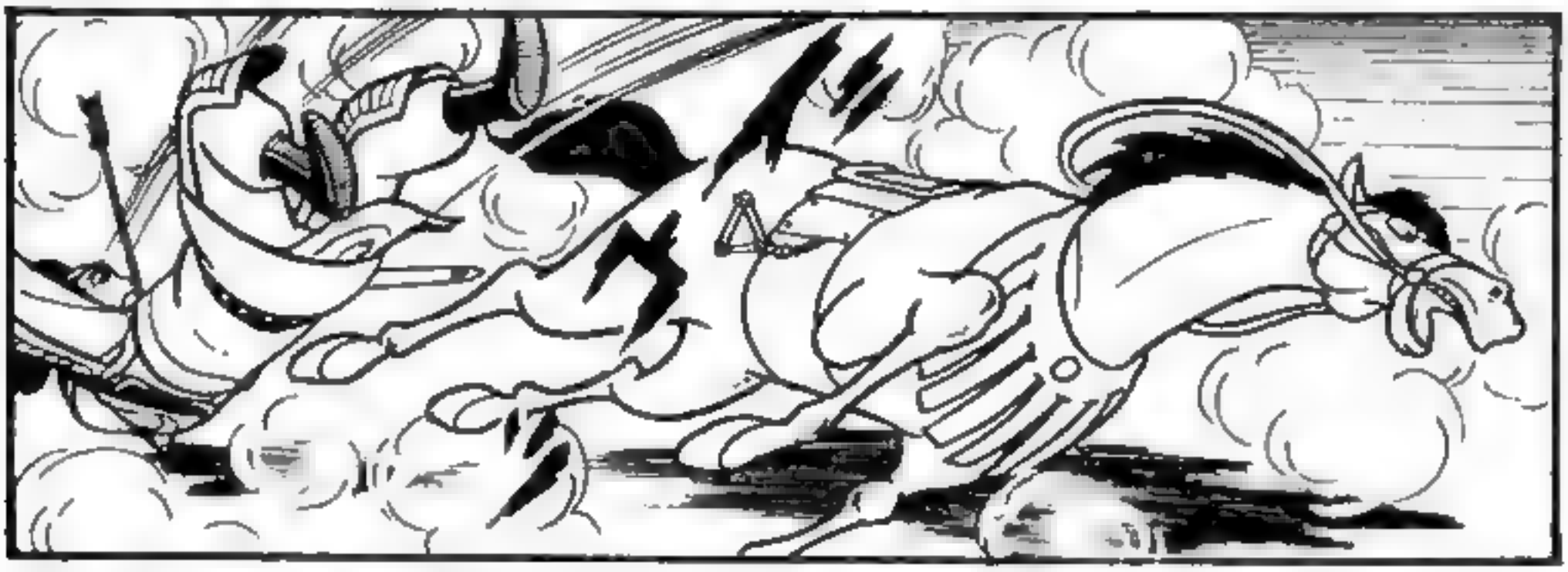
YOU VERMIN OF JIANGDONG! I WON'T LET YOU TAKE OUR LAND!

DO NOT FALTER! KEEP ON FIGHTING, MEN!

FATHER, ALLOW ME.

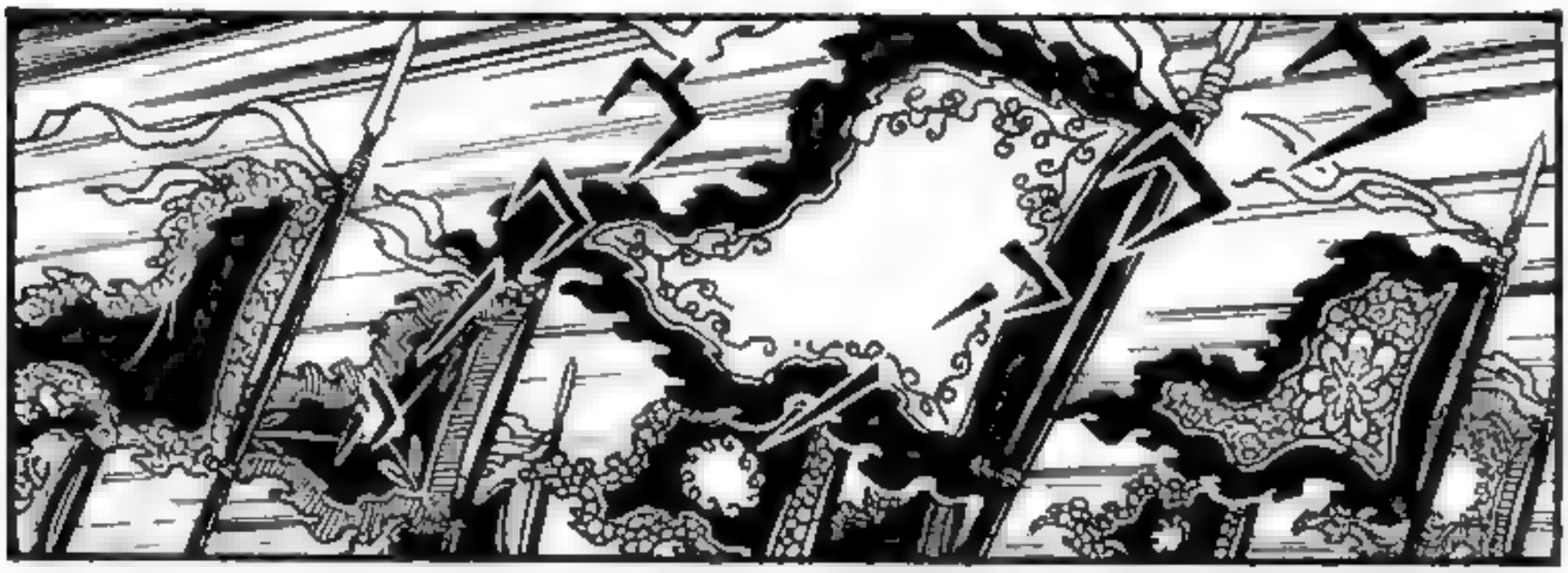
WON'T SOMEONE DEAL WITH THAT MAN FOR MY SAKE?
HAHA, SUCH BIG WORDS FROM A SMALL MAN.

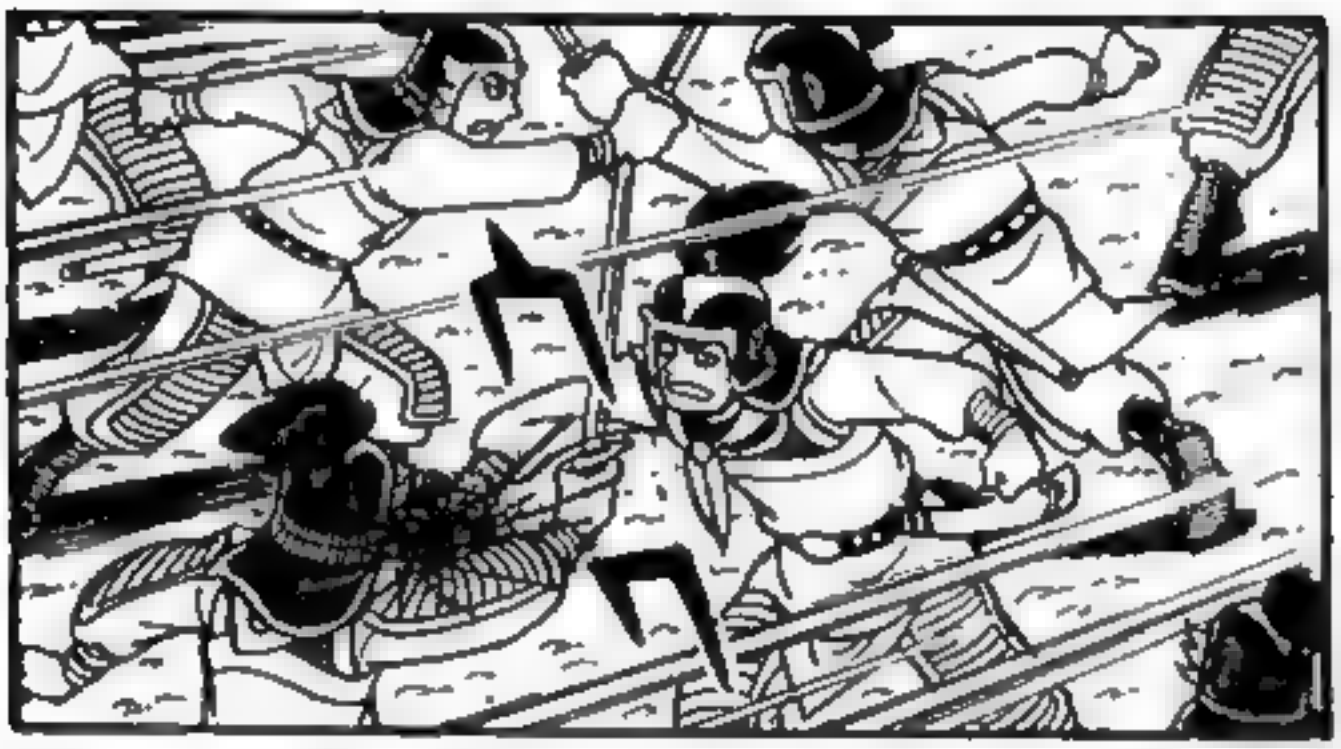


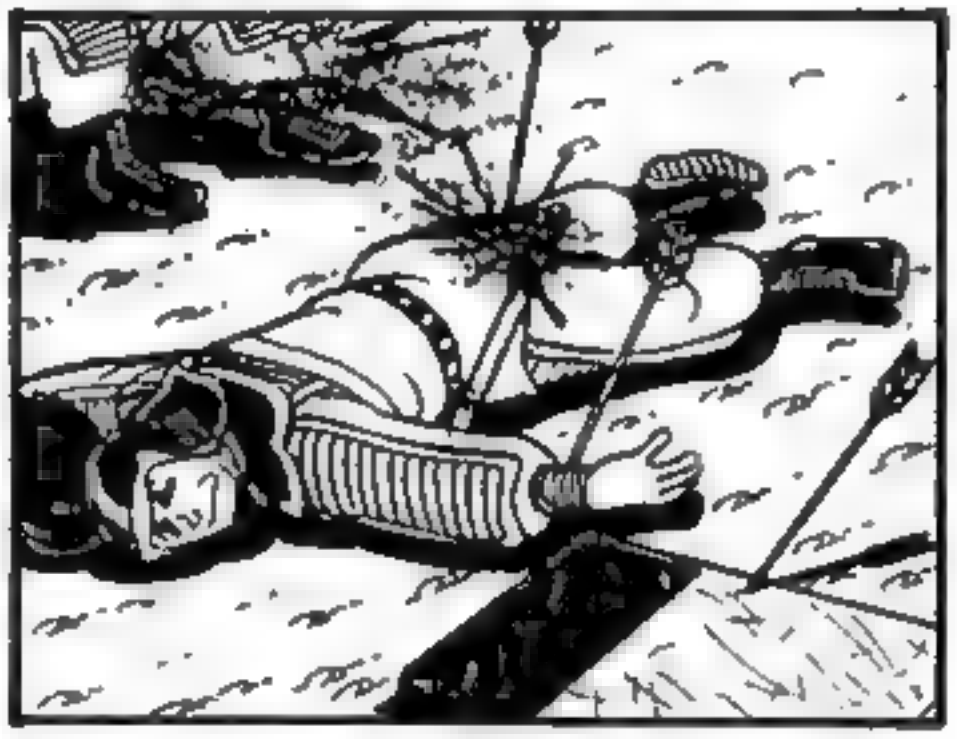


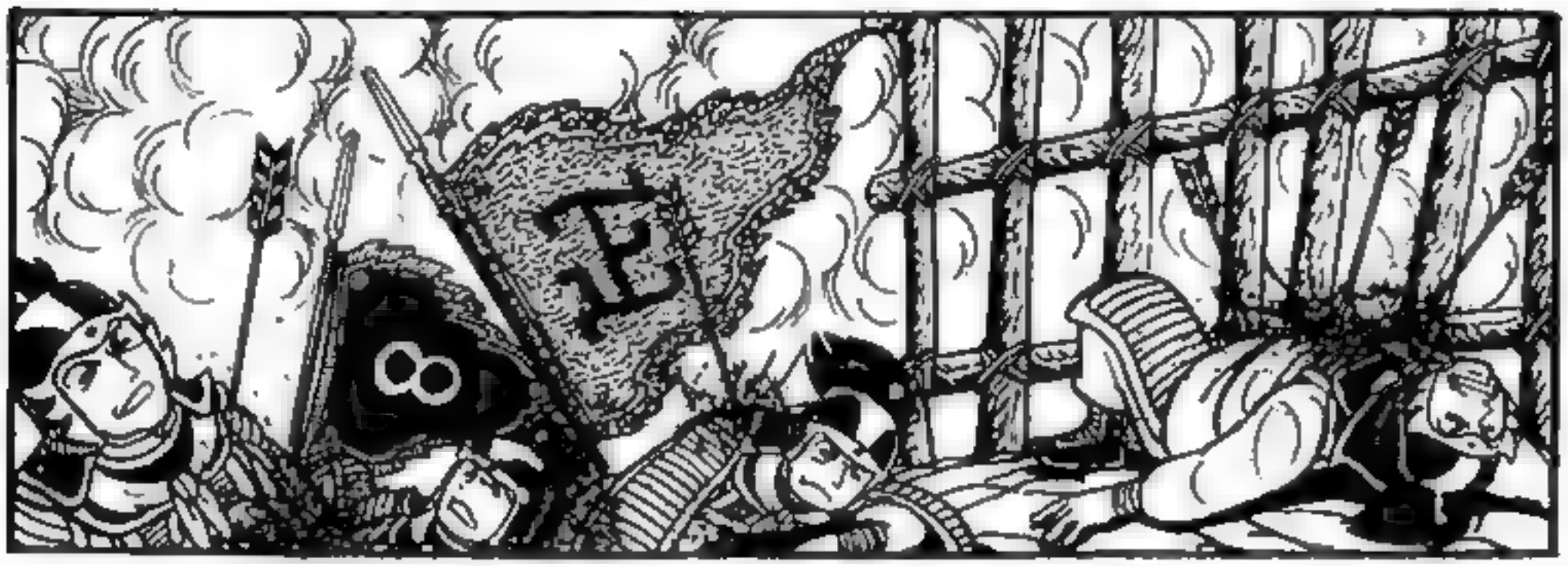
ALL UNITS, CHARGE!

AS EXPECTED OF MY SON. WELL DONE, SUN CE.

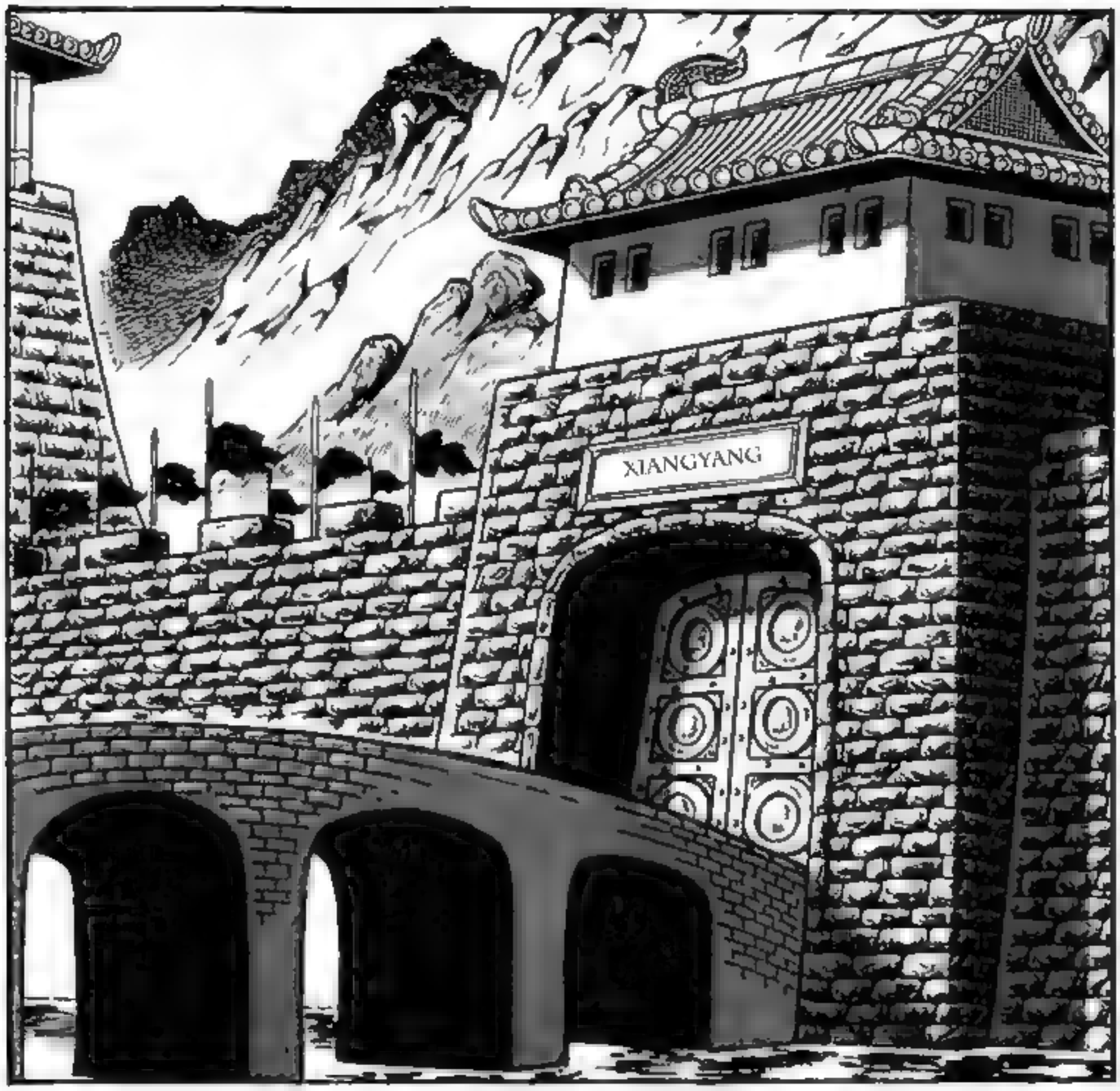


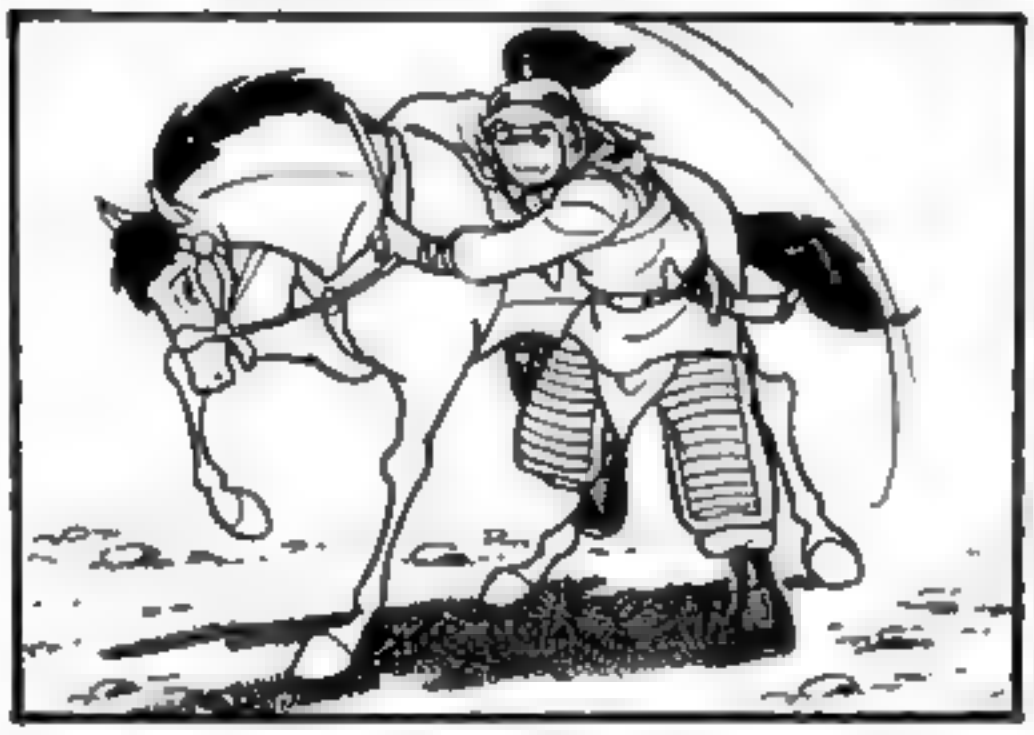






ILL OMEN





URGENT REPORT FOR GOVERNOR LIU BIAO!

WHAT!? HUANG ZU WAS DEFEATED?

GENERAL HUANG ZU HAS SUFFERED A MAJOR DEFEAT AND SO HE HAD RETREATED BACK ALL THE WAY TO DENGCHENG!

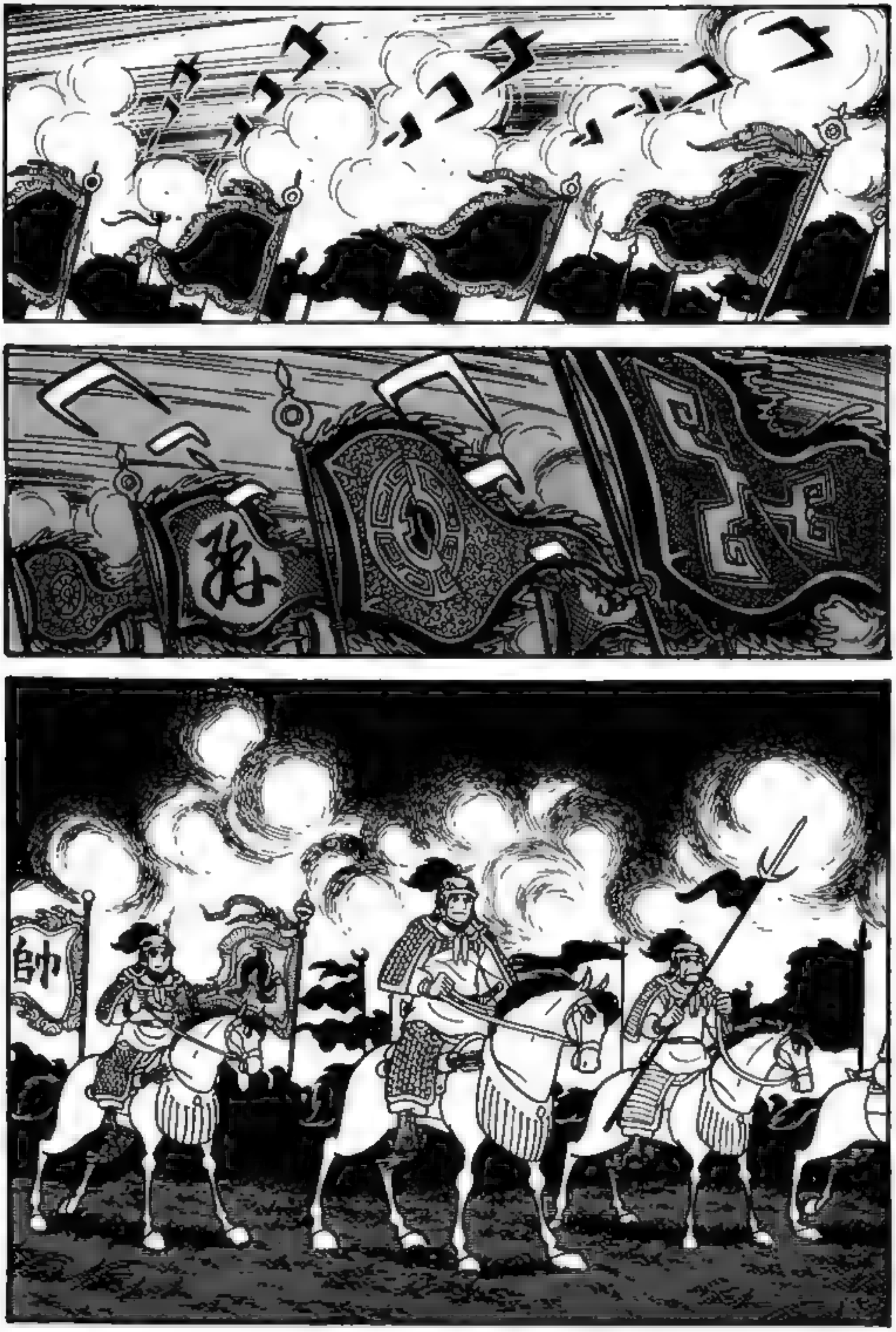
THE ENEMIES HAVE PROVEN TO BE VERY TOUGH AND THEIR MORALE IS THROUGH THE ROOF. THEY ARE EXPECTED TO REACH XIANGYANG AT ANY MOMENT NOW, SIR!

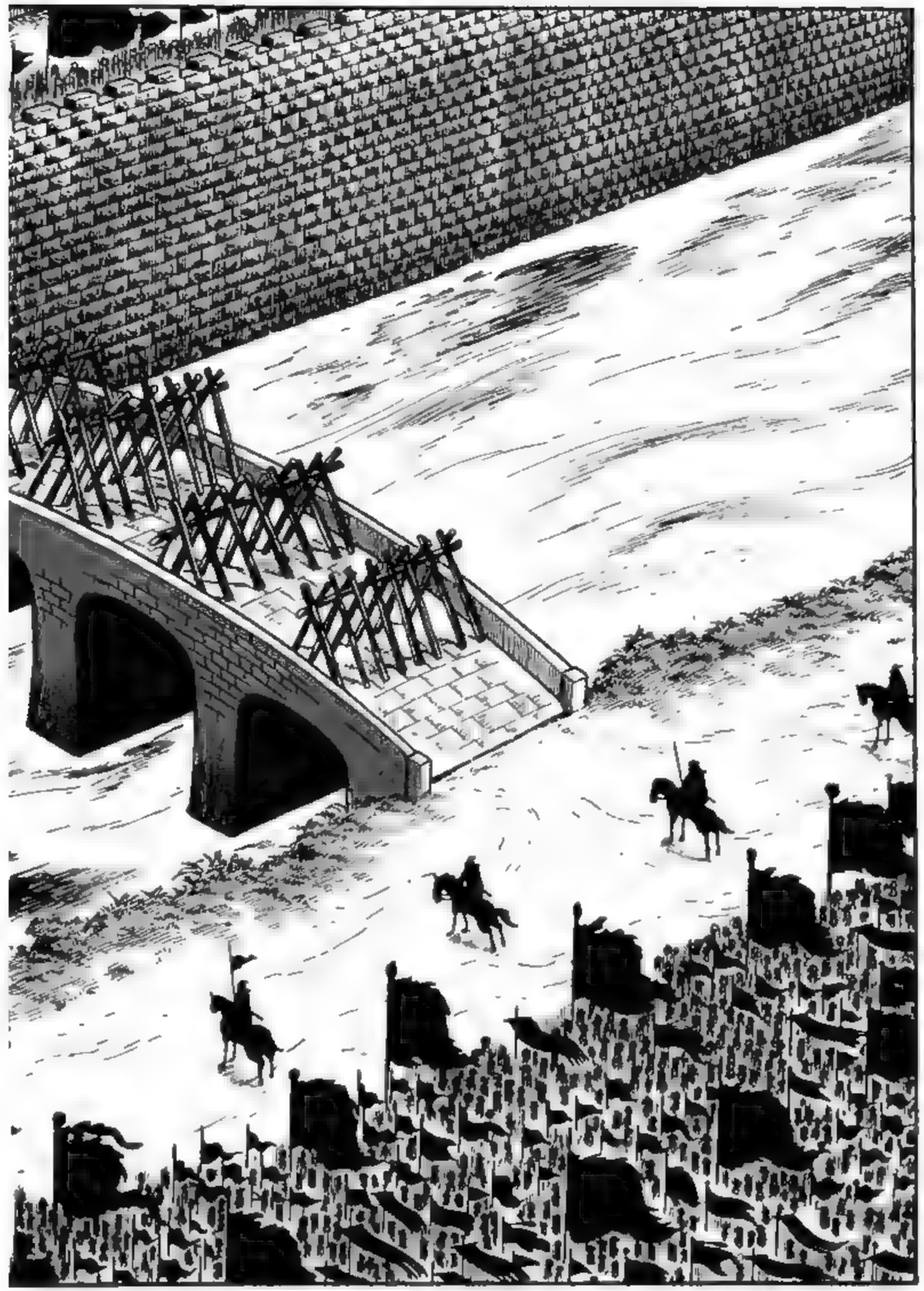
I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BEST TO ENTRENCH OURSELVES IN THE IMPENETRABLE CASTLE OF XIANGYANG,

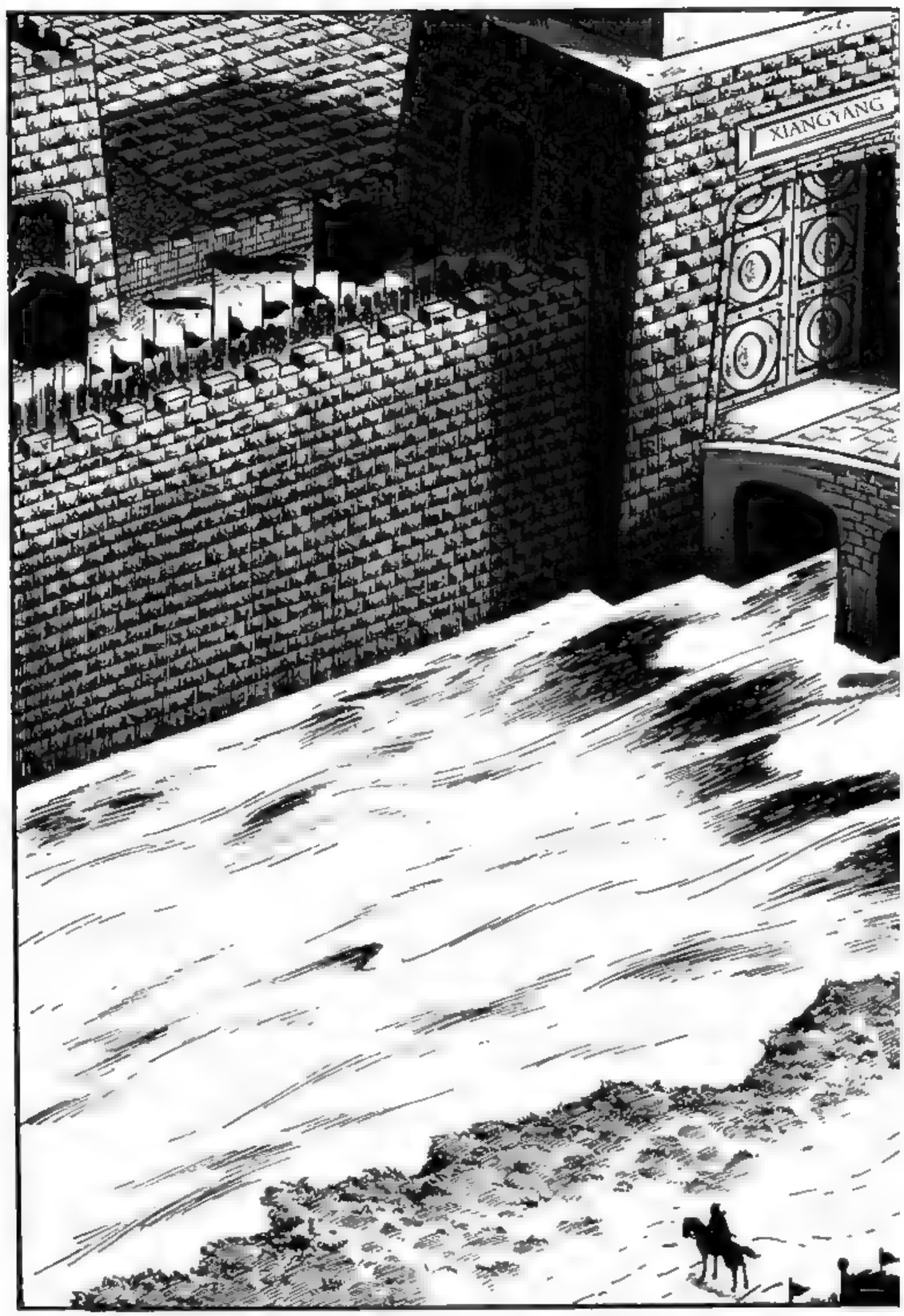
AND WAIT FOR YUAN SHAO'S REINFORCEMENTS IN THE MEANTIME.

MEN, YOU HEARD THE REPORT! WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE WOULD BE THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION!?

THEN WE SHALL DO EXACTLY THAT! FORTIFY THE DEFENSES AND PREPARE FOR SUN JIAN'S FORCES!

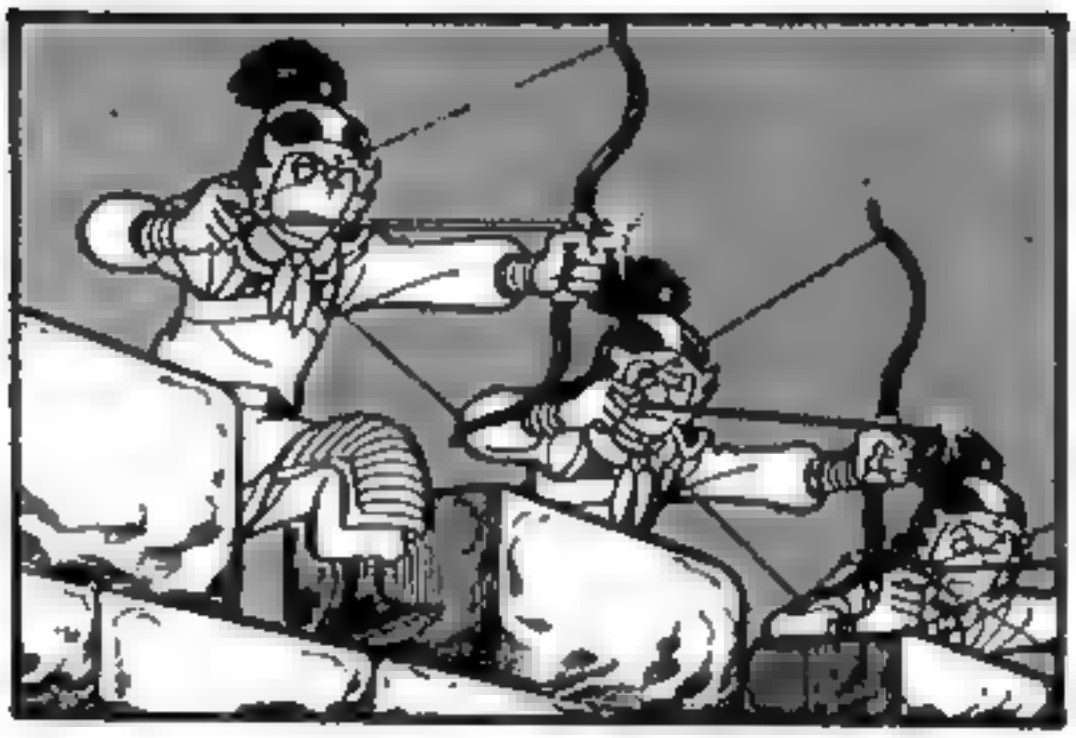


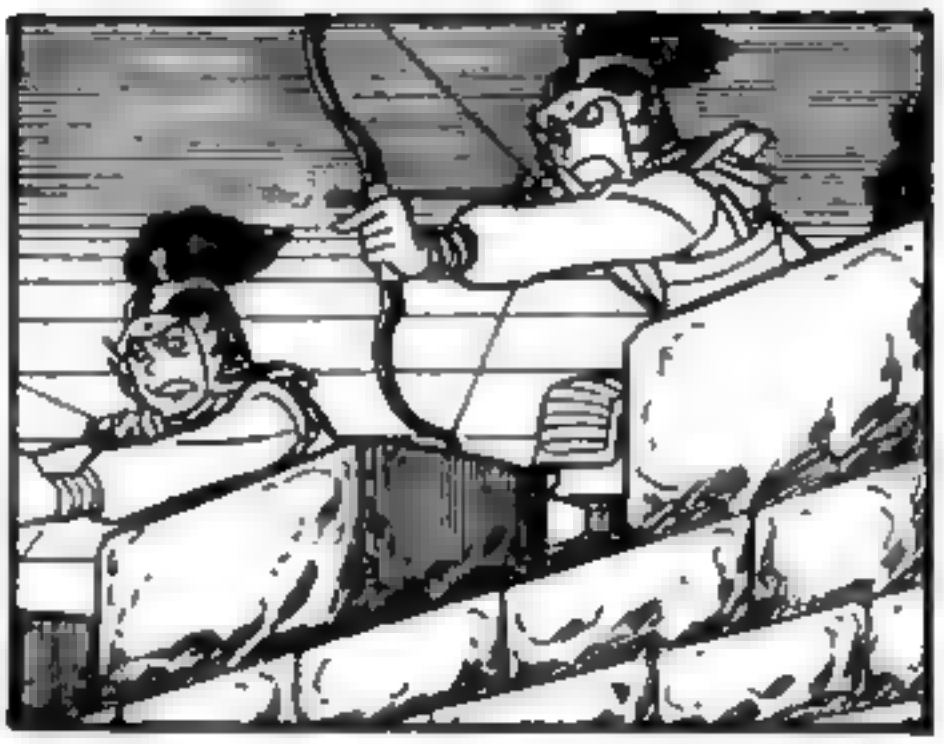


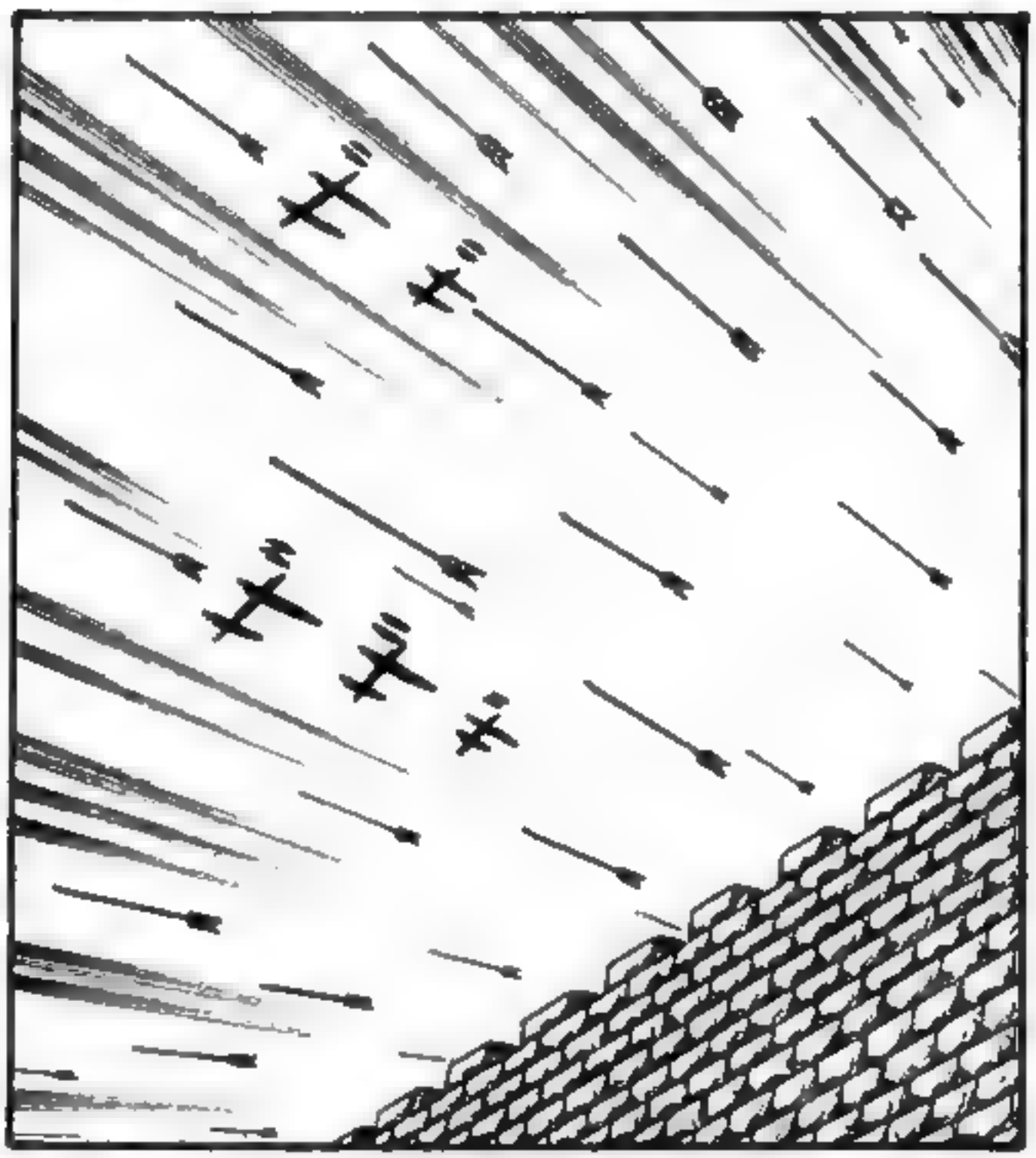

XIANGYANG

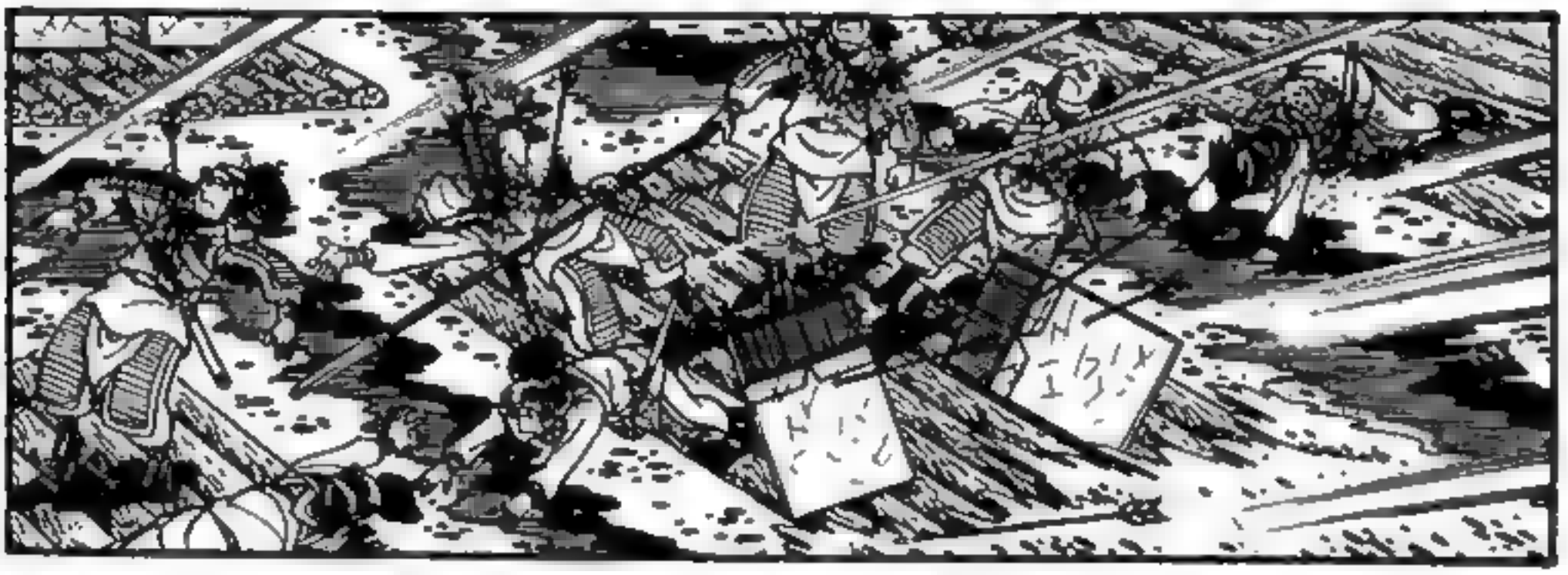
ALRIGHT MEN, LET US TAKE THIS CASTLE SWIFTLY WITH OUR MIGHT!

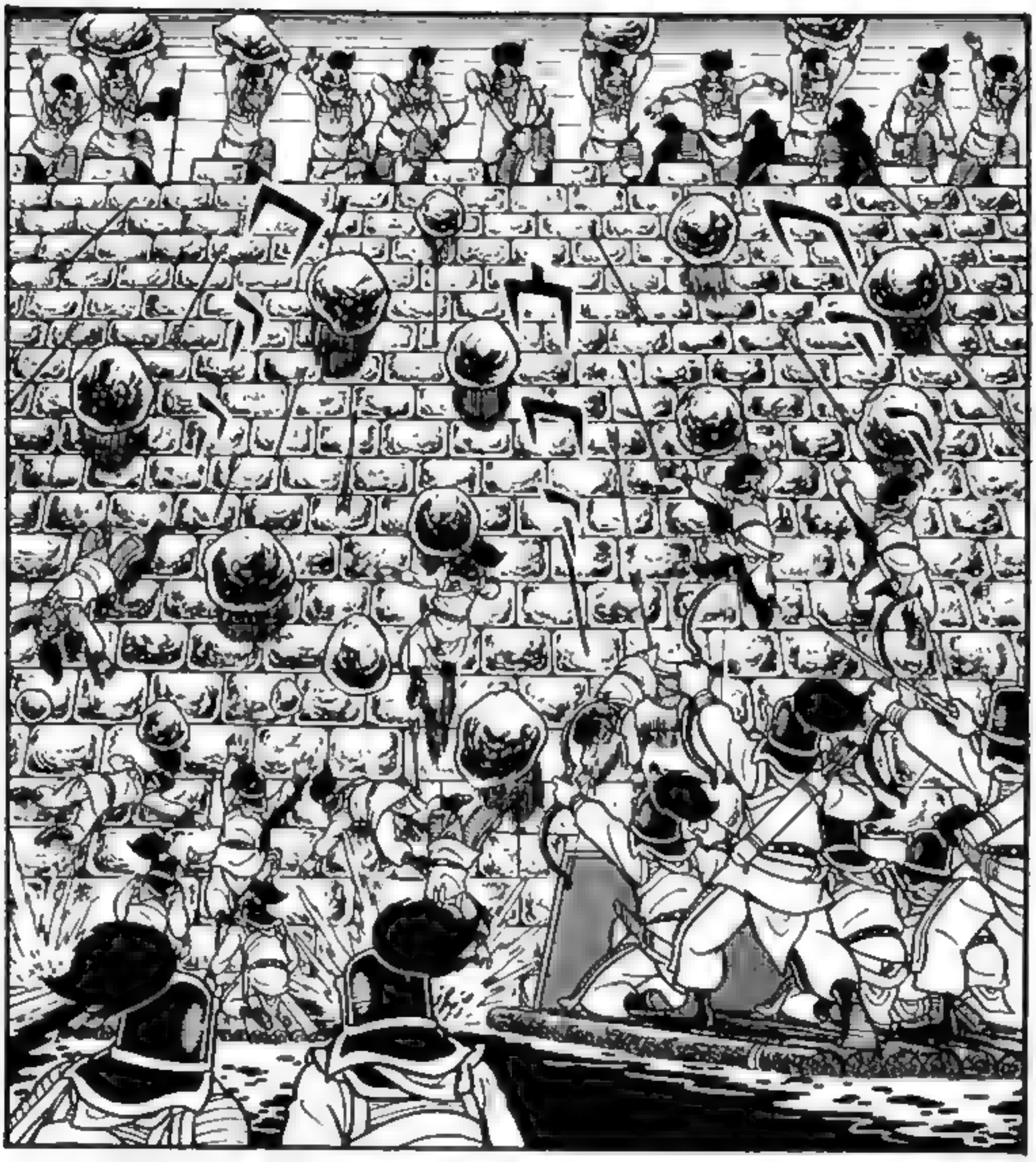
SO THIS IS THE CASTLE OF XIANG-YANG SAID TO BE IMPENETRABLE...



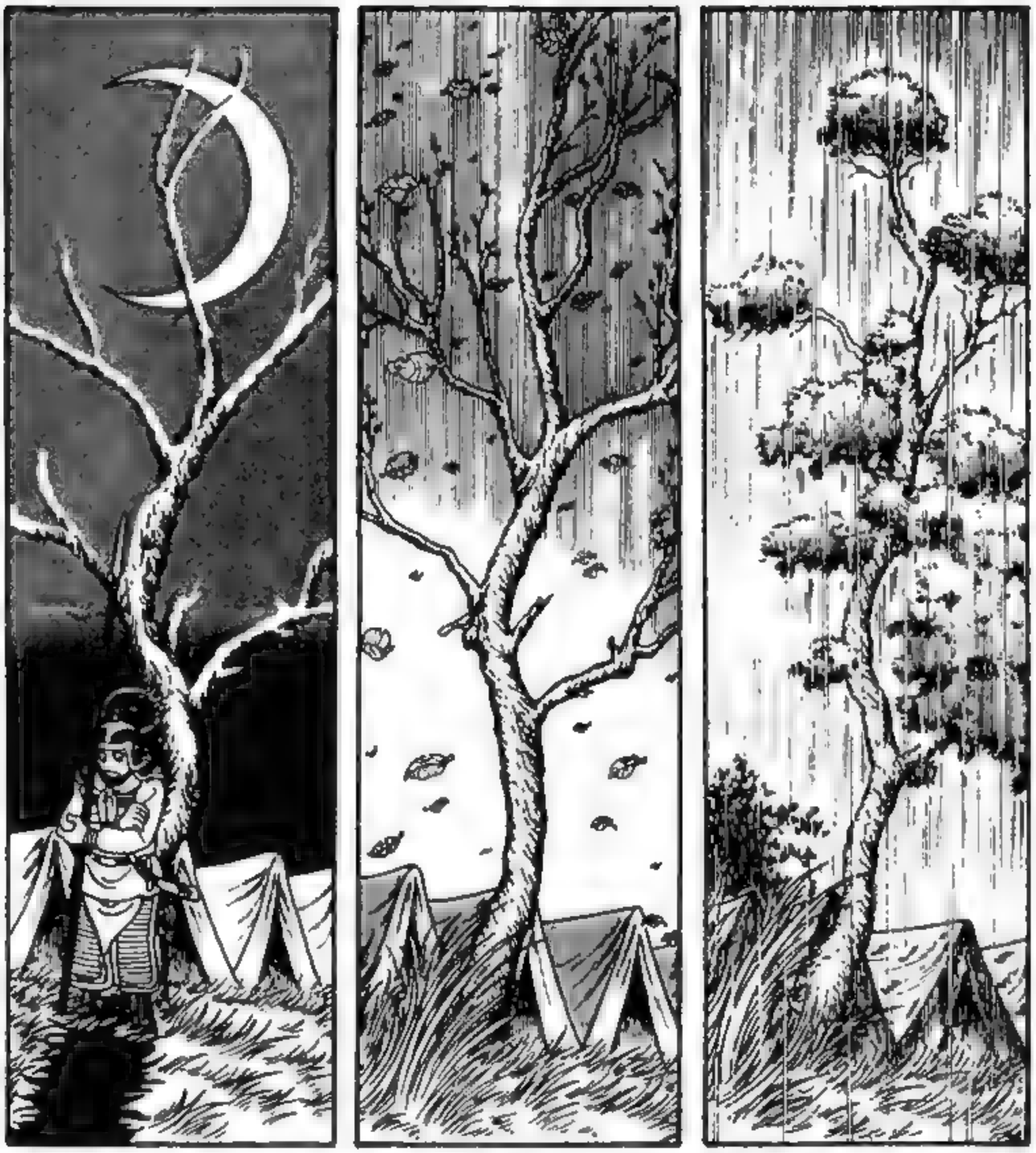








A WAR OF ATTRITION WOULD MOST LIKELY BE THE BEST WAY TO GO THEN.
HMM, AS EXPECTED OF XIANGYANG... THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE CHANCE OF US OVERTAKING IT.



YES, SIR.

THE WINDS ARE QUITE STRONG TODAY. TELL THE SOLDIERS TO BE WARY OF FIRES.

IF A WILDFIRE WERE TO START ON A WINDY DAY SUCH AS TODAY, IT WILL ONLY RESULT IN DISASTER FOR US!

MEN, BE CAREFUL OF FIRES!

HMM?

ビュウ

AGHH!

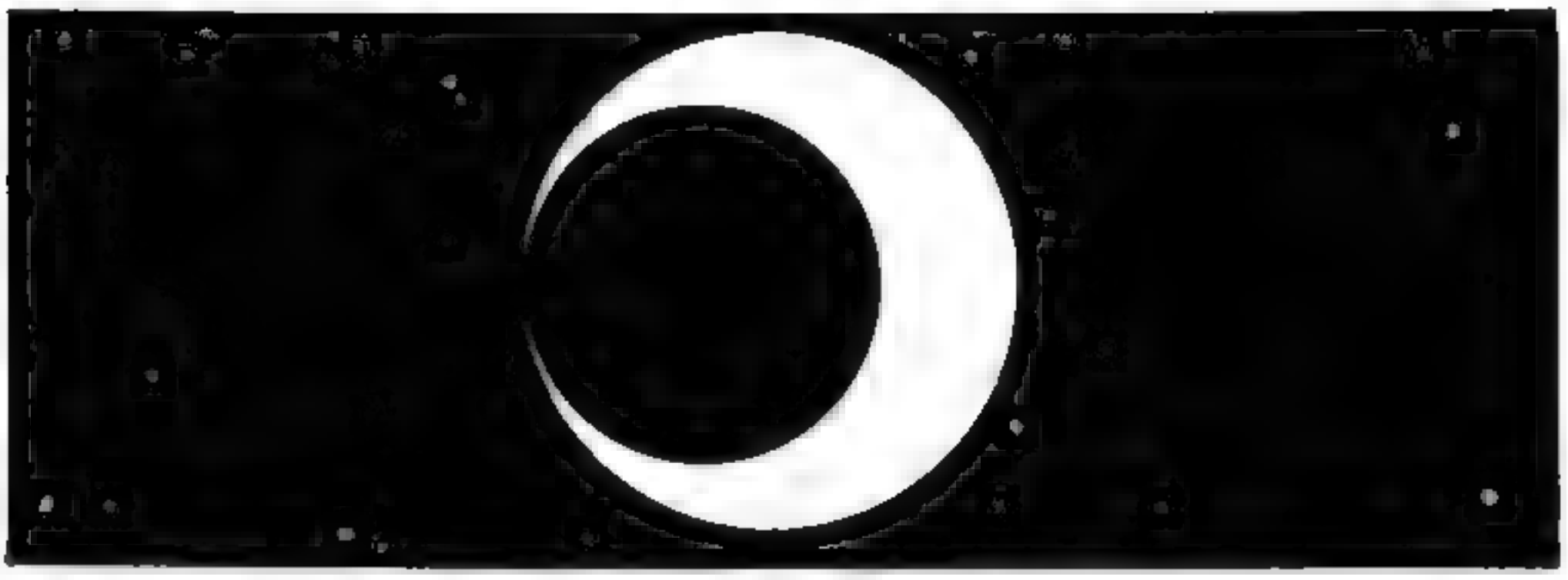
FATHER!

ARE YOU HURT SIR!?

BUT EVEN SO, FOR THE COMMANDER'S FLAG TO BREAK...

I'M FINE, NO NEED TO WORRY.

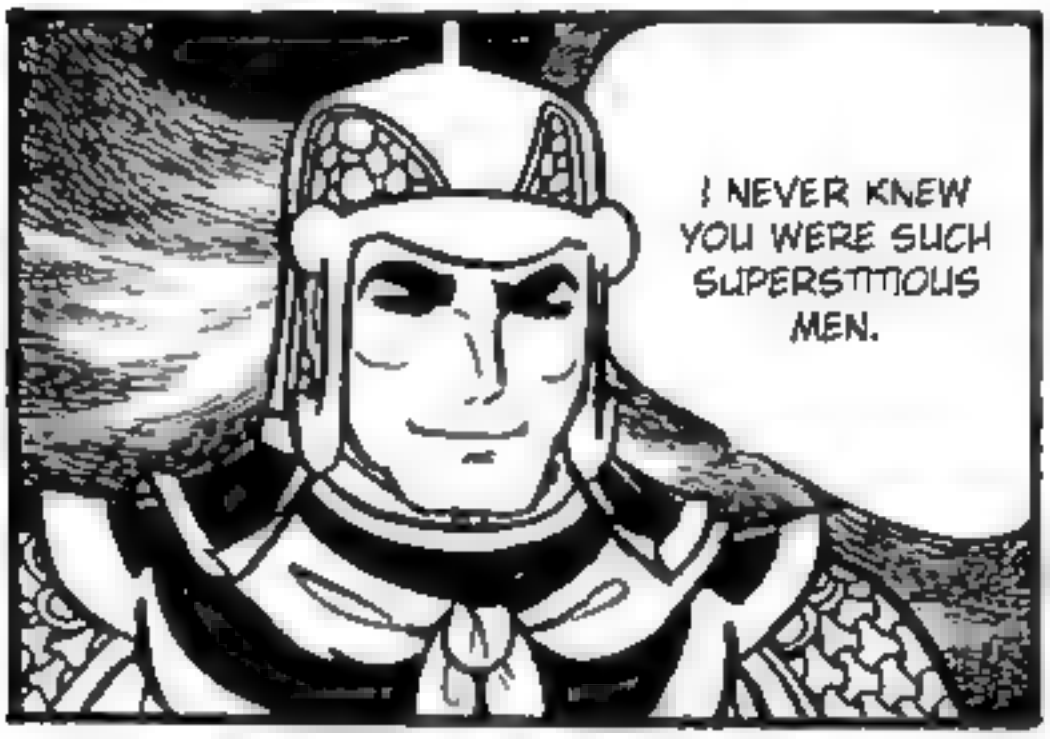
THE FLAG BEARING THE CHARACTER 帥 SYMBOLIZED THE COMMANDER FOR SUCH A SIGNIFICANT FLAG TO BREAK, IT WAS OBVIOUS WHY THE SOLDIERS COULD ONLY SEE IT AS AN ILL OMEN



WITH ALL DUE RESPECT SIR, WINTER IS APPROACHING AND OUR SOLDIERS ARE BECOMING TIRED.

WHAT!? YOU WISH TO RETREAT AFTER COMING SO FAR!?

MOREOVER, THEIR MORALE HAS BEEN AFFECTED BY SIR'S FLAG BREAKING THE OTHER DAY.


I NEVER KNEW YOU WERE SUCH SUPERSTITIOUS MEN.

AHAHA HAHA!

XIANGYANG IS TIRED AS WELL. WITH ONE MORE PUSH, IT SHALL BE OURS. AND YET YOU MEN WISH TO THROW IT ALL AWAY FOR A MERE SUPERSTITION!?

THE WIND IS THIS WORLD'S BREATHING. IT SIGNIFIES THE CHANGE OF SEASONS, NOT TO DELIVER ME A PERSONAL MESSAGE.

WE SHALL ATTACK FULL OUT STARTING TOMORROW!

JUST HOW WILL OUR SOLDIERS ACT IF OUR GENERALS ARE SCARED OF A LITTLE SUPERSTITION!?

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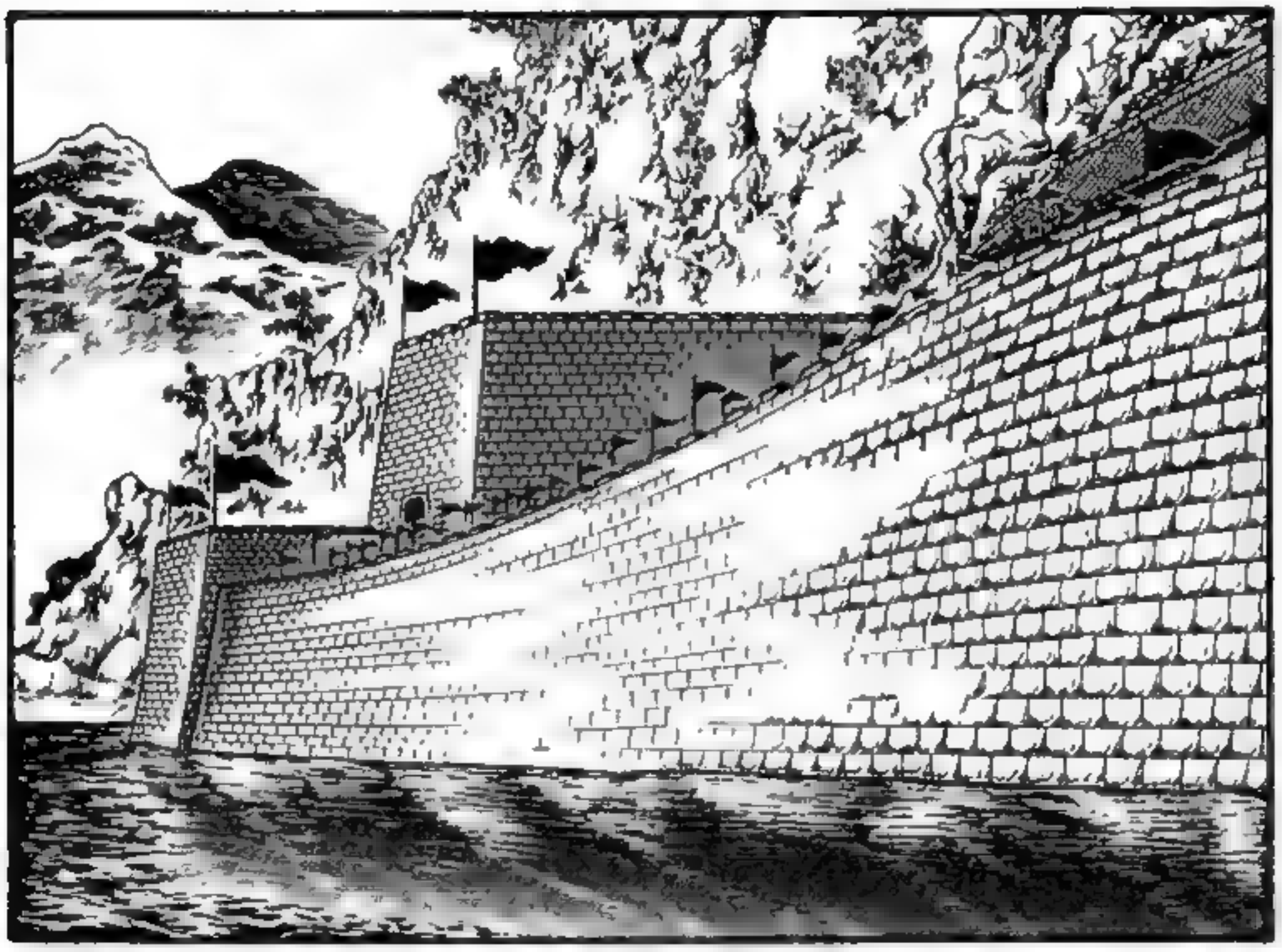


THAT TOO, BUT THERE WAS ALSO A STAR FALLING TOWARDS THE WESTERN SKIES LAST NIGHT.

AH, ARE YOU REFERRING TO THE STRONG WINDS LAST NIGHT?
SIR, I BELIEVE THAT LAST NIGHT'S WEATHER WAS ABNORMAL.

HMM, THAT'S QUITE AN ILL OMEN YOU SPEAK OF.

AND THAT FALLING STAR WAS A GENERAL'S STAR. I BELIEVE IT SYMBOLIZES A GENERAL'S DOWNFALL.

NO, SIR. FOR US, IT IS AN AUSPISCIOUS SIGN. JUDGING BY HOW THE STAR FELL IN SUN JIAN'S TERRITORY, I BELIEVE THAT IT IS HE WHO MUST WORRY ABOUT THE ILL OMEN.

ONCE YUAN SHAO'S FORCES ARRIVE, SUN JIAN AND HIS MEN WILL BECOME NOTHING MORE THAN RATS TRAPPED IN A CAGE.

WE MUST USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONTACT YUAN SHAO AND HAVE HIM IMMEDIATELY SEND REINFORCEMENTS.

IS THERE ANY AMONG YOU BRAVE ENOUGH TO ESCAPE SUN JIAN'S SURROUNDING FORCES AND CONTACT YUAN SHAO?

HMM...

GOOD, THEN I SHALL LEAVE IT TO YOU.

AH, LU GONG!

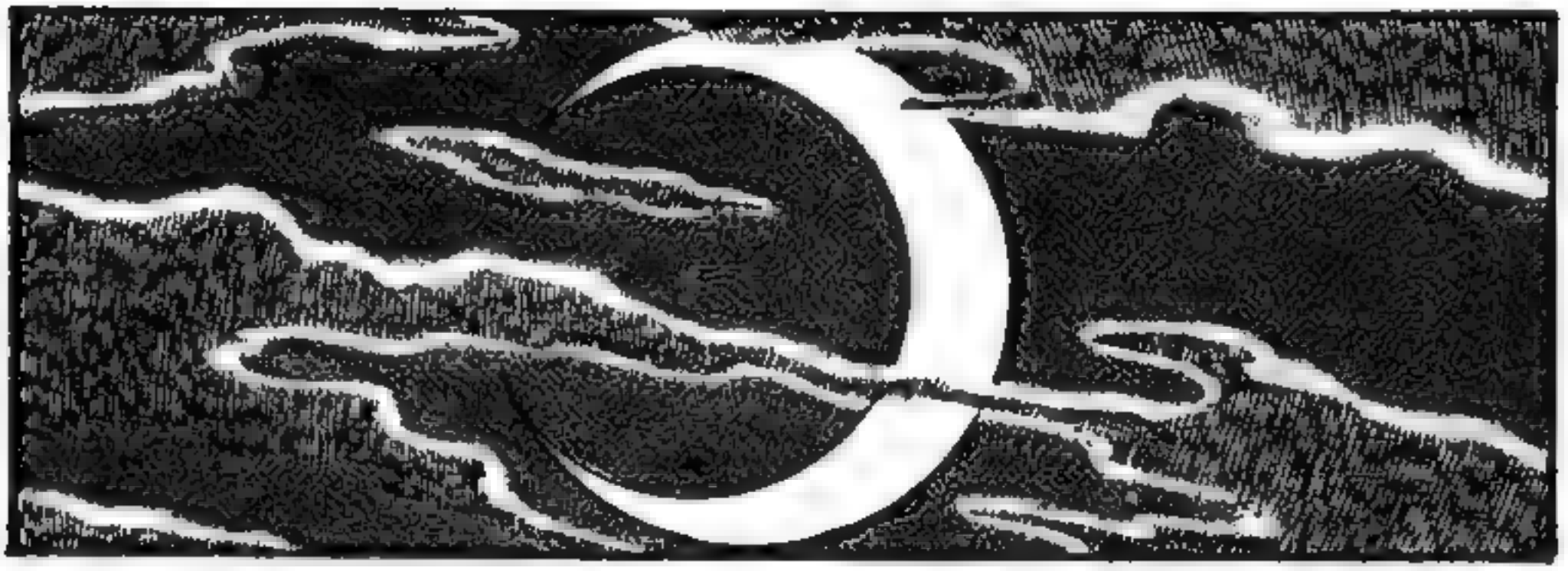
SIR, PLESE ENTRUST ME WITH THAT TASK.

ONCE THAT'S DONE, THE ENEMY WILL BE UNABLE TO PURSUE AFTER YOU AND YOU WILL BE FREE TO CONTACT YUAN SHAO.

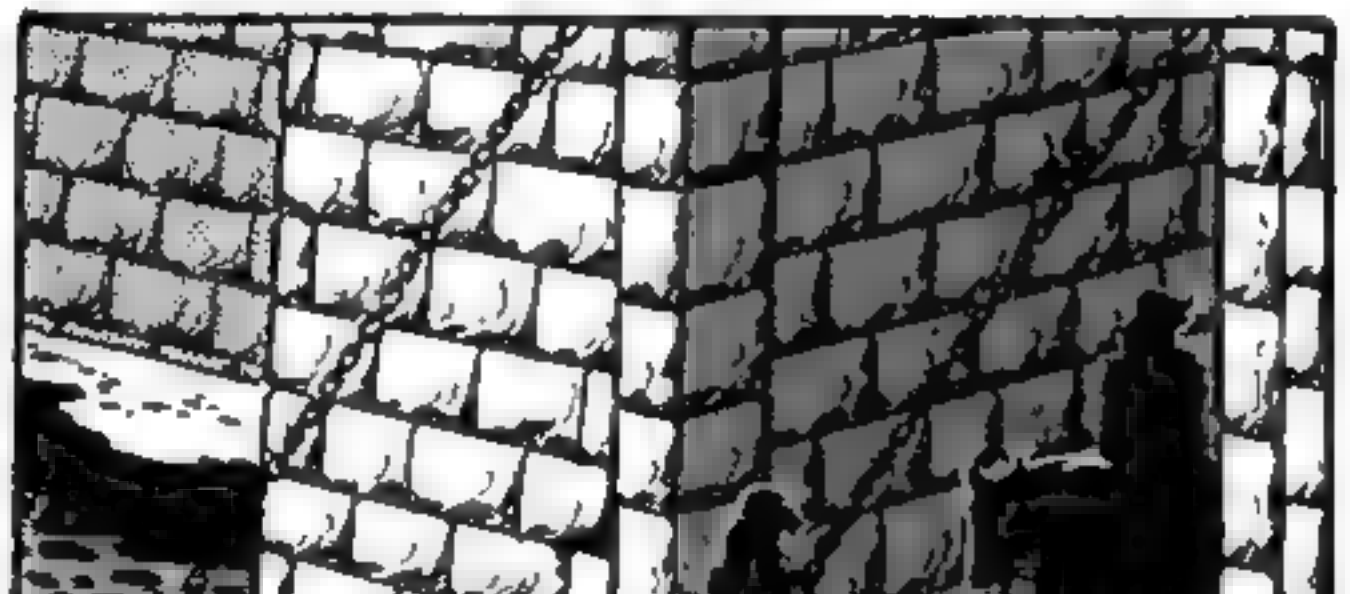
I SHALL GIVE YOU 500 MEN FOR THIS TASK. FIRST, YOU MUST BREAK THROUGH ENEMY ENCIRCLEMENTS AND HEAD FOR MT. XIAN. THERE, YOU WILL ROLL DOWN BOULDERS TO BLOCK OFF THE ROUTE.

YES, SIR.

LEAVE AS SOON AS NIGHT FALLS.

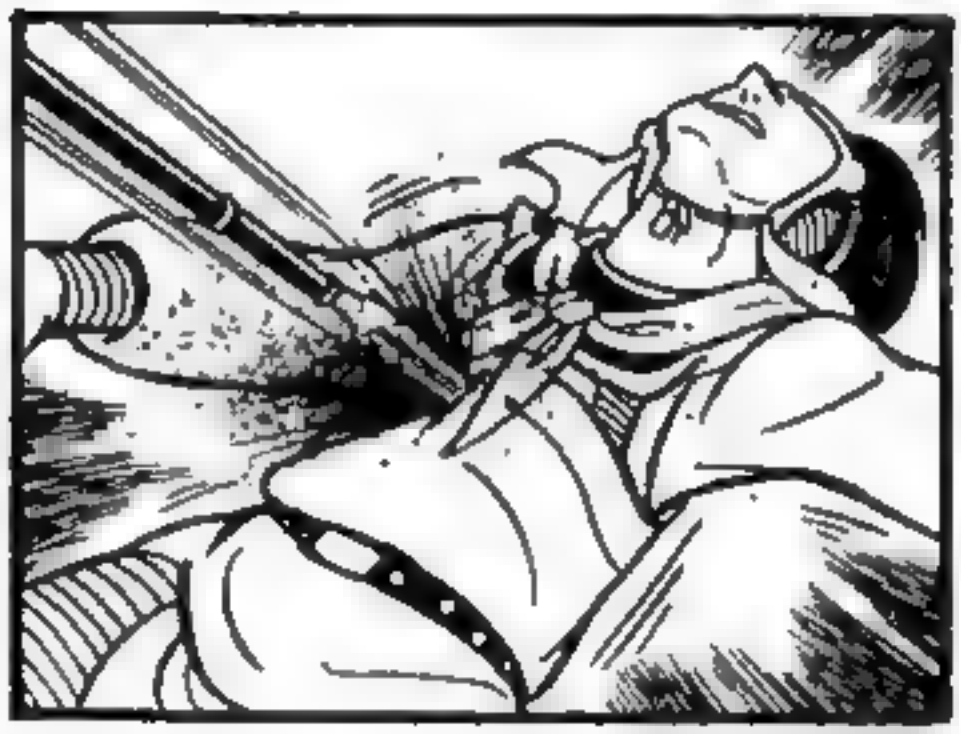


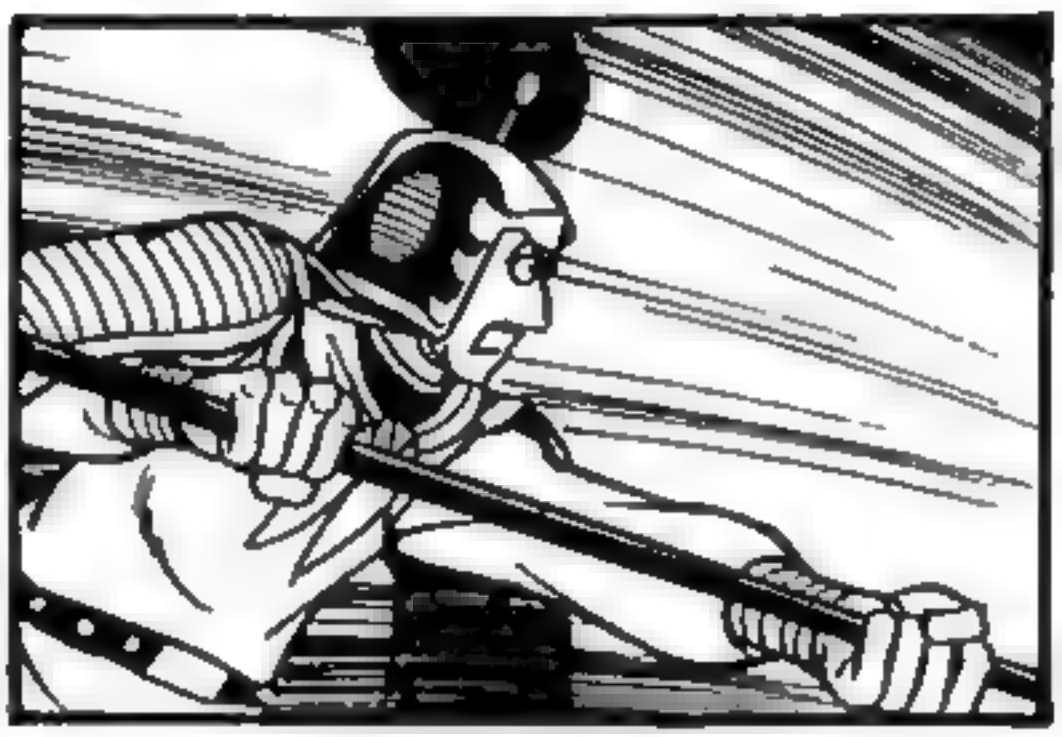
BE SURE NOT TO MAKE ANY NOISE.



BREAK THROUGH THEIR LINES, MEN!

HALT! WHO GOES THERE!?

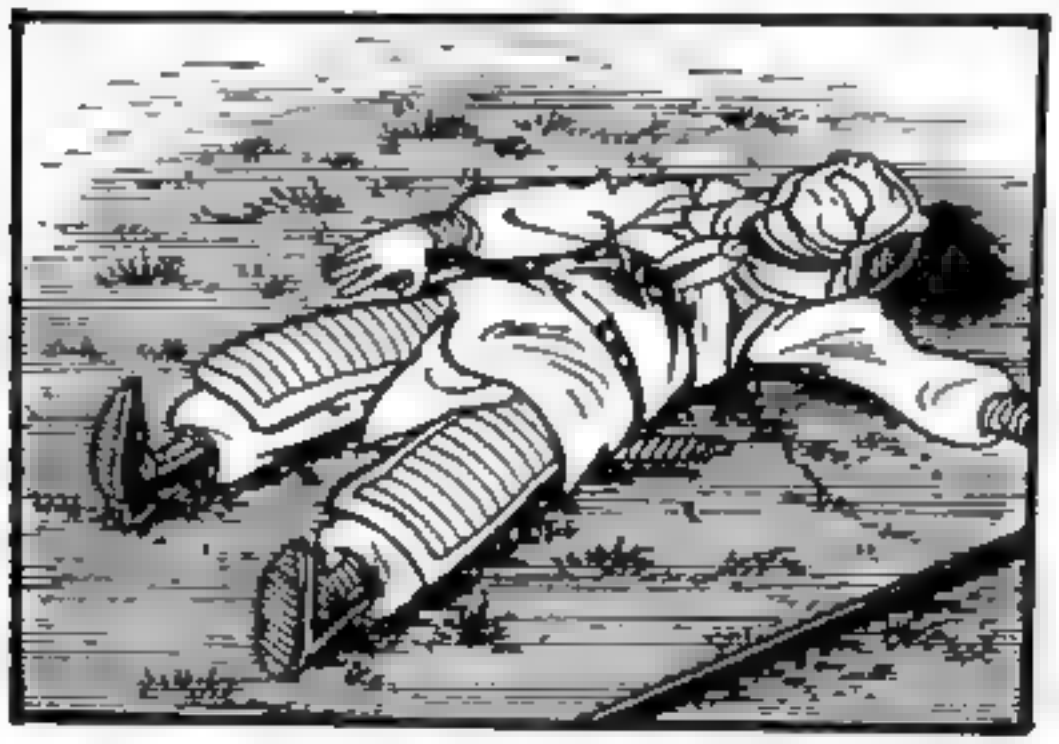




WHAT WERE THOSE NOISES JUST NOW!?

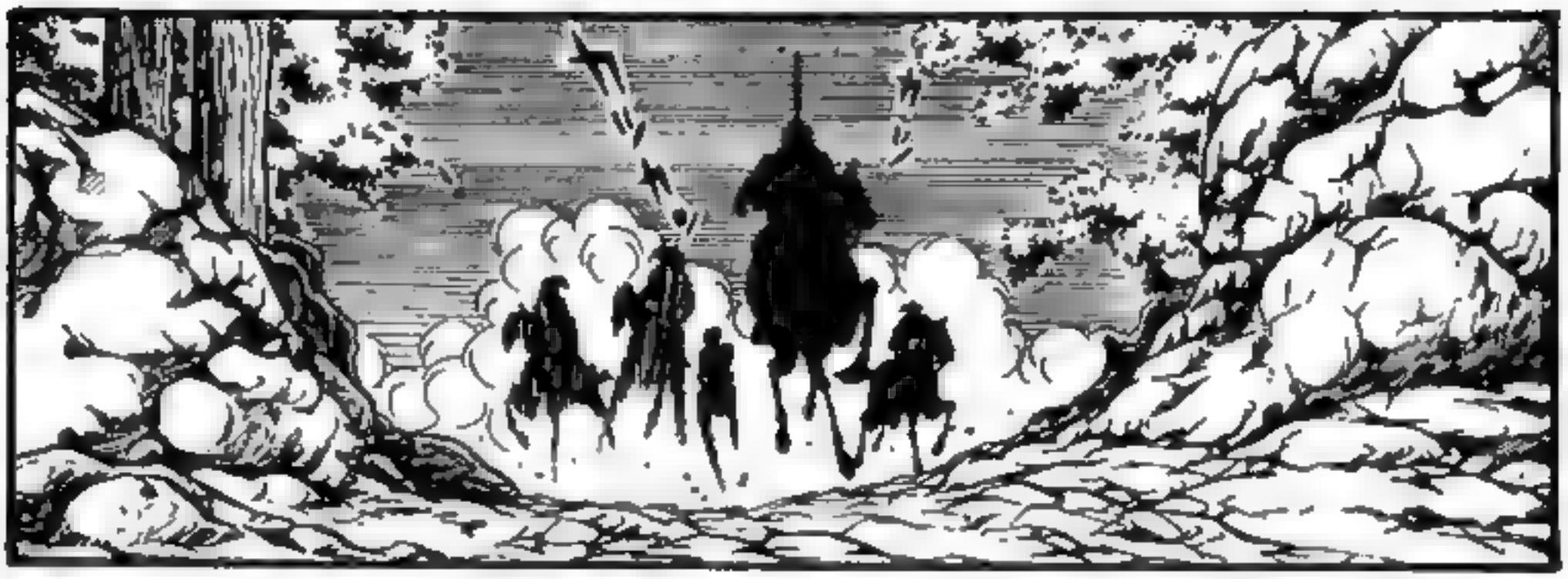
AHH!

WHAT'S GOING ON!?



AFTER THEM! DON'T LET THEM ESCAPE!

SOME OF THE ENEMIES MUST HAVE ESCAPED FROM THE CASTLE!



NOW! DROP THE BOULDERS!

THEY'RE FOLLOWING US AS PLANNED, SIR.

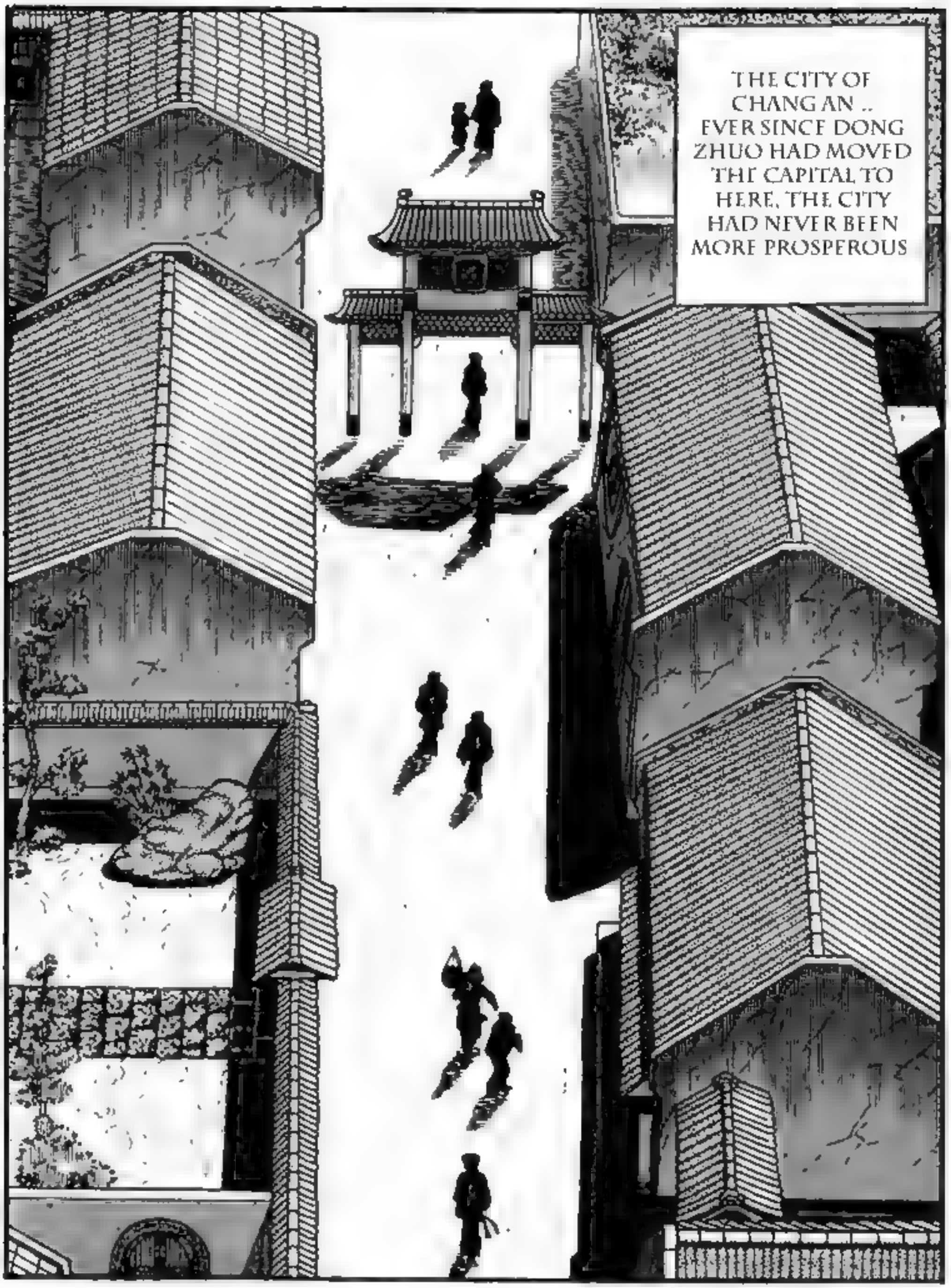
QUICKLY!

THROW THEM BELOW!

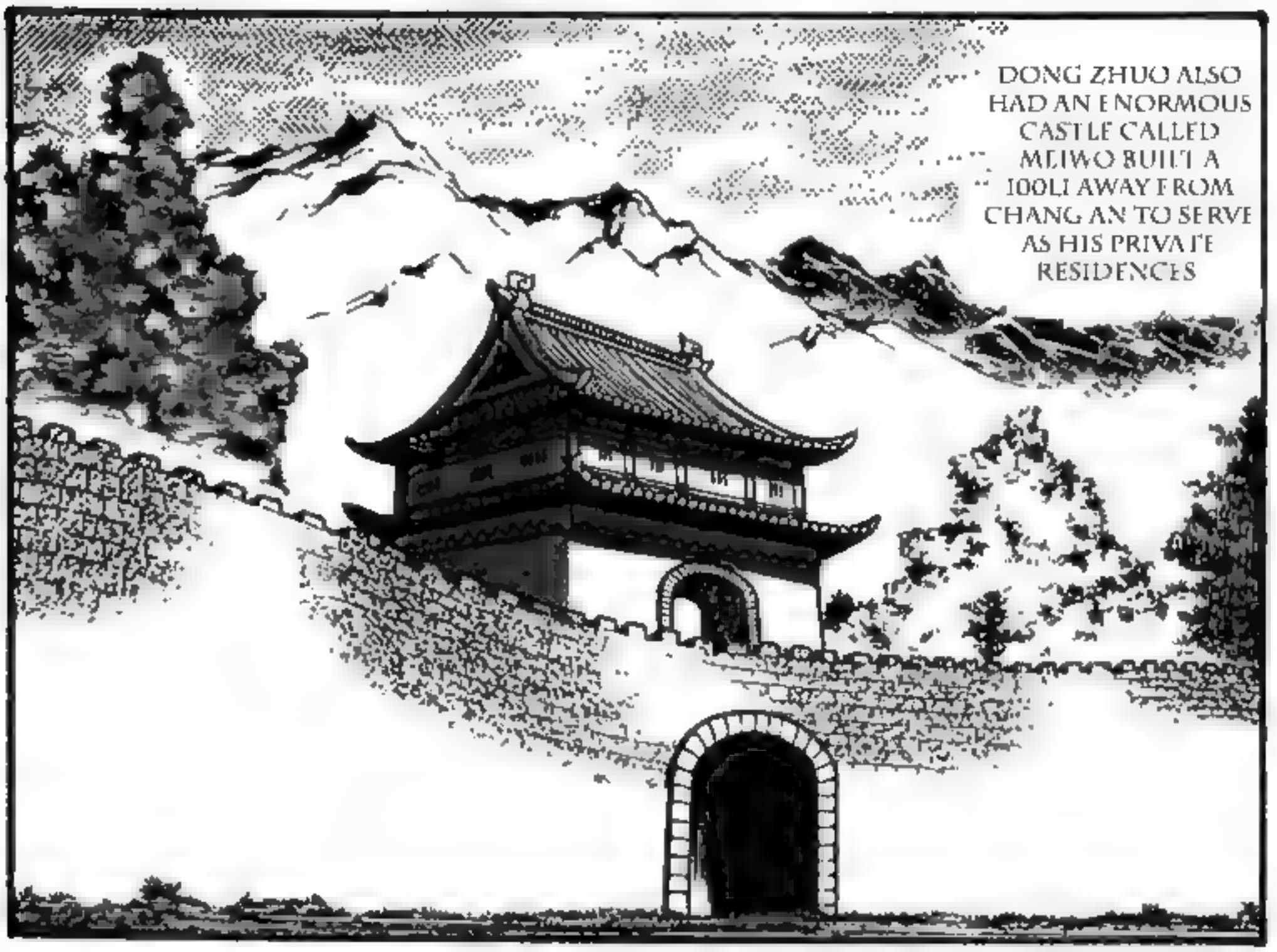
AGHHH!

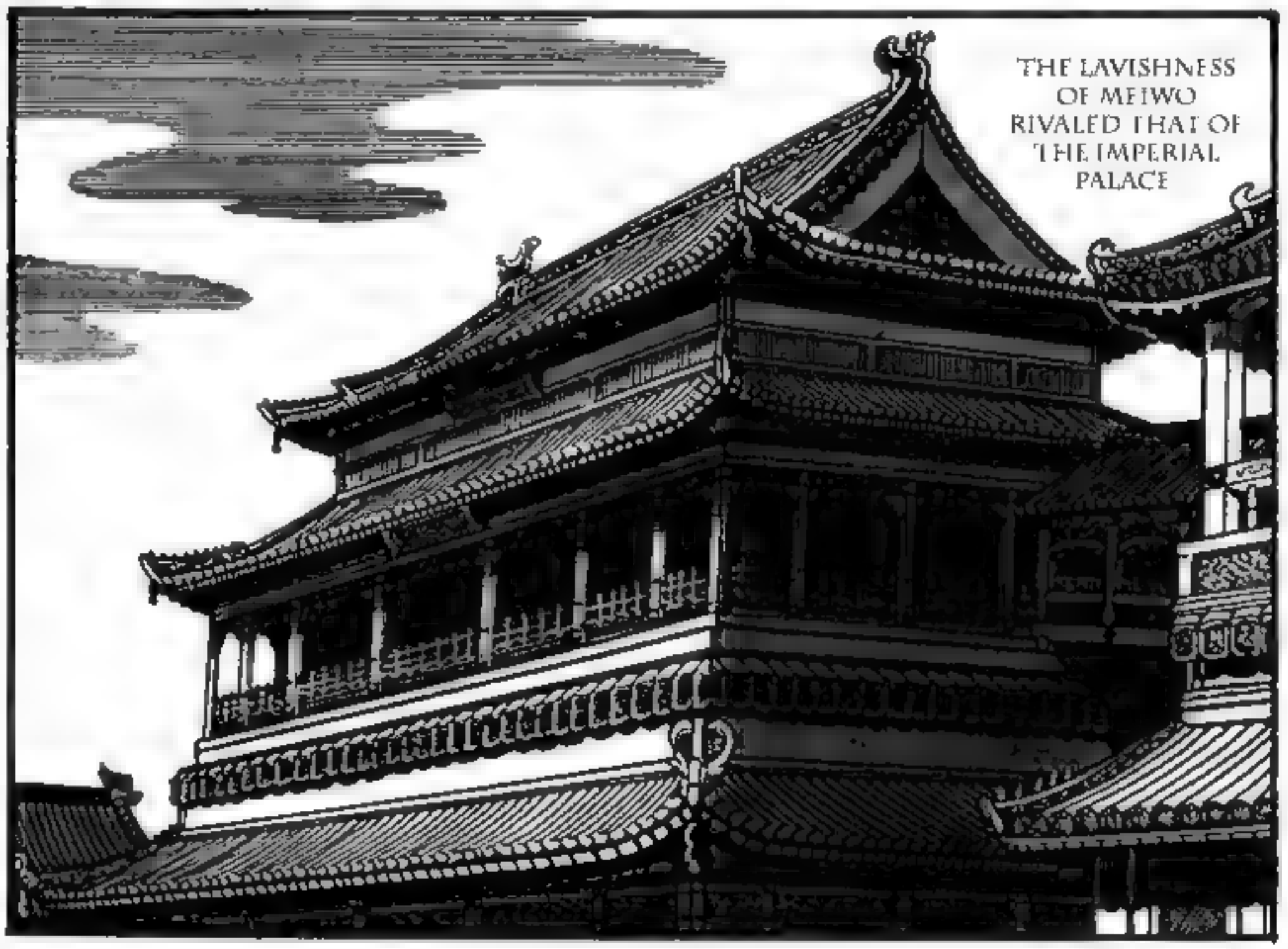
192 A.D
NIGHT OF
NOVEMBER
7TH
SUN JIAN
DIED AT THE
AGE OF 37

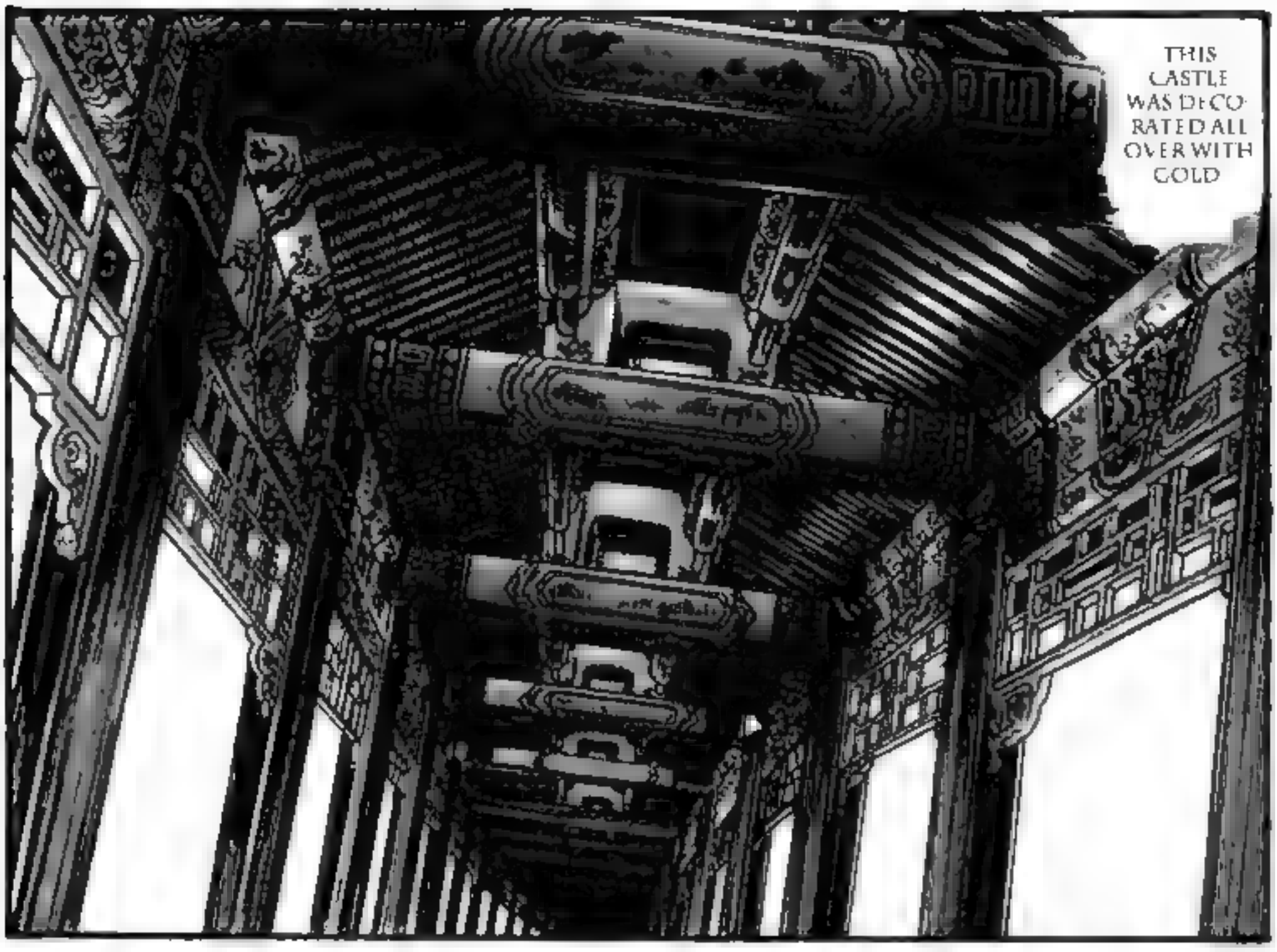
WANG YUN'S PLOT

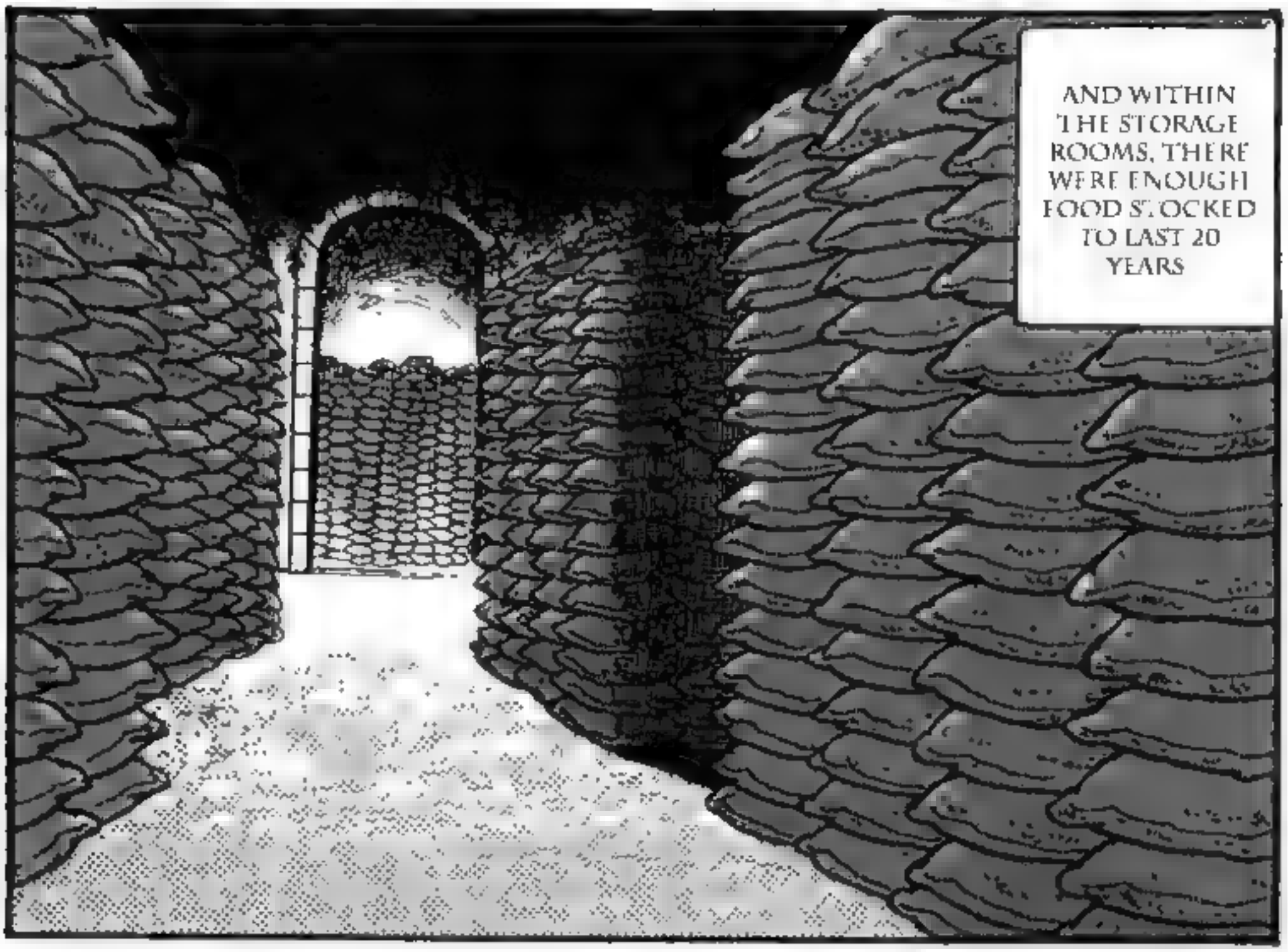


BY NOW, DONG ZHUO'S POWER AND INFLUENCE HAD SURPASSED EVEN THAT OF THE EMPEROR.
EVERYTIME THAT DONG ZHUO PASSED THROUGH THE CITY STREETS, THE PEOPLE CLEANED THE STREETS, PUT UP TARPS TO COVER THE STORES AND HOUSES AND EVEN REFRAINED FROM COOKING AS TO PREVENT ANY SMOKE OR DIRT GETTING OUT


DONG ZHUO ALSO HAD AN ENORMOUS CASTLE CALLED MEIWO BUILT A 100LI AWAY FROM CHANG AN TO SERVE AS HIS PRIVATE RESIDENCES


THE LAVISHNESS OF MEIWO RIVALED THAT OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE


THIS CASTLE WAS DECORATED ALL OVER WITH GOLD


AND WITHIN THE STORAGE ROOMS, THERE WERE ENOUGH FOOD STOCKED TO LAST 20 YEARS

NOT ONLY THAT 808 OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MAIDENS AGED 15 TO 20 WERE PLACED IN MEIWO.

AND AN IMMEASURABLE AMOUNT OF TREASURE WAS STORED HERE AS WELL.

THE PEOPLE DID NOT DARE THINK OF ANY REBELLIOUS THOUGHTS. THEY MERELY TRIED THEIR BEST TO LIVE AS QUIETLY AS POSSIBLE, AS TO NOT INVOKE DONG ZHUO'S WRATH.

YES, SIR. IT SEEMS THAT HIS ELDEST SON SUN CE HAS NOW TAKEN CHARGE AND RETREATED HIS ARMY BACK TO CHANGSHA.

WHAT, SUN JIAN HAS DIED IN BATTLE?

HA HA HA

HA HA HA HA HA

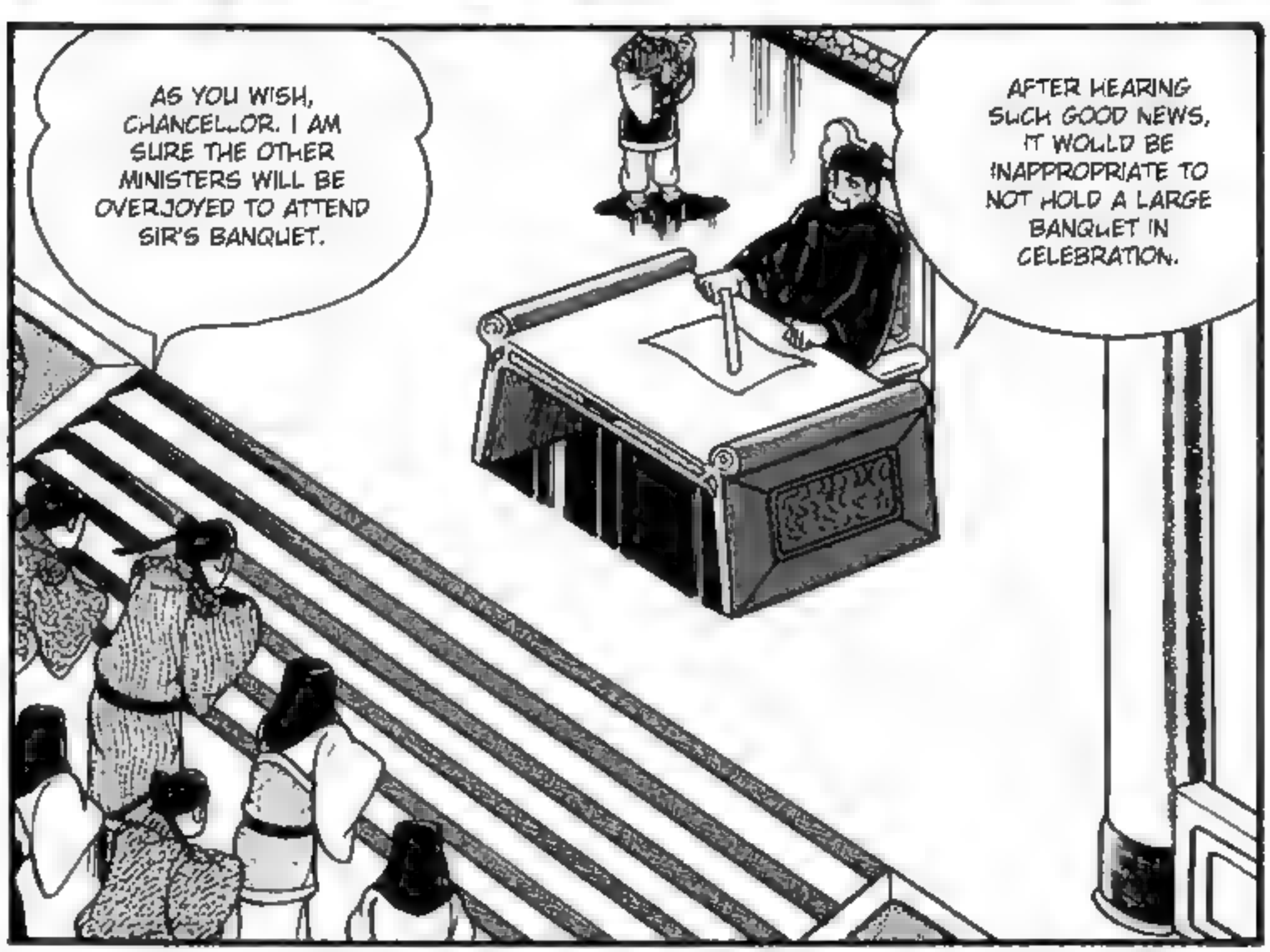
IS THAT SO?

HAHAHA...
HAHA...
HA... HAHA...
HAHAHA

IT IS AS YOU SAY, CHAN-CELLOR.

IF I RECALL CORRECTLY, SUN CE IS STILL ONLY A CHILD. THERE SHOULD BE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT THEN.

THERE IS NO BETTER NEWS THAN MY ENEMIES DESTROYING EACH OTHER.


AS YOU WISH, CHANCELLOR. I AM SURE THE OTHER MINISTERS WILL BE OVERJOYED TO ATTEND SIR'S BANQUET.
AFTER HEARING SUCH GOOD NEWS, IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE TO NOT HOLD A LARGE BANQUET IN CELEBRATION.

I CONGRATULATE SIR FOR THE JOYOUS TURN OF EVENTS THERE IS NO ONE ON THIS EARTH WHO DARES TO OPPOSE SIR.

HAHAHA! ENOUGH WITH THE FLATTERY!

THE ONLY THING LEFT FOR SIR IS TO CLAIM THE THRONE ITSELF!

DID SIR CALL ME?

AH, MY ASTROLOGER!

YES. HAVE THERE BEEN ANY CHANGES IN THE SKY?

AH YES, SIR. I OBSERVED A FAINT DARK STREAK AGAINST THE NIGHT SKIES LAST NIGHT. I'M AFRAID IT PORTENDS SOMEONE PLANNING TO BETRAY SIR.

IS THERE SOMETHING THAT COMES TO SIR'S MIND?

HMM, I SEE...

P-PLEASE FORGIVE ME, SIR.

AN ASTROLOGER ONLY NEEDS TO OBSERVE THE SKIES AND INFORM ME WHEN THERE ARE ANY CHANGES. DO NOT OVERSTEP YOUR BOUNDARIES!

JUST WHAT RIGHT DO YOU HAVE TO WISH TO KNOW THAT!?

YES?

LU BU!

ヒロイ

WHISPER
WHISPER

?
ACK! W-WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO WITH ME!?

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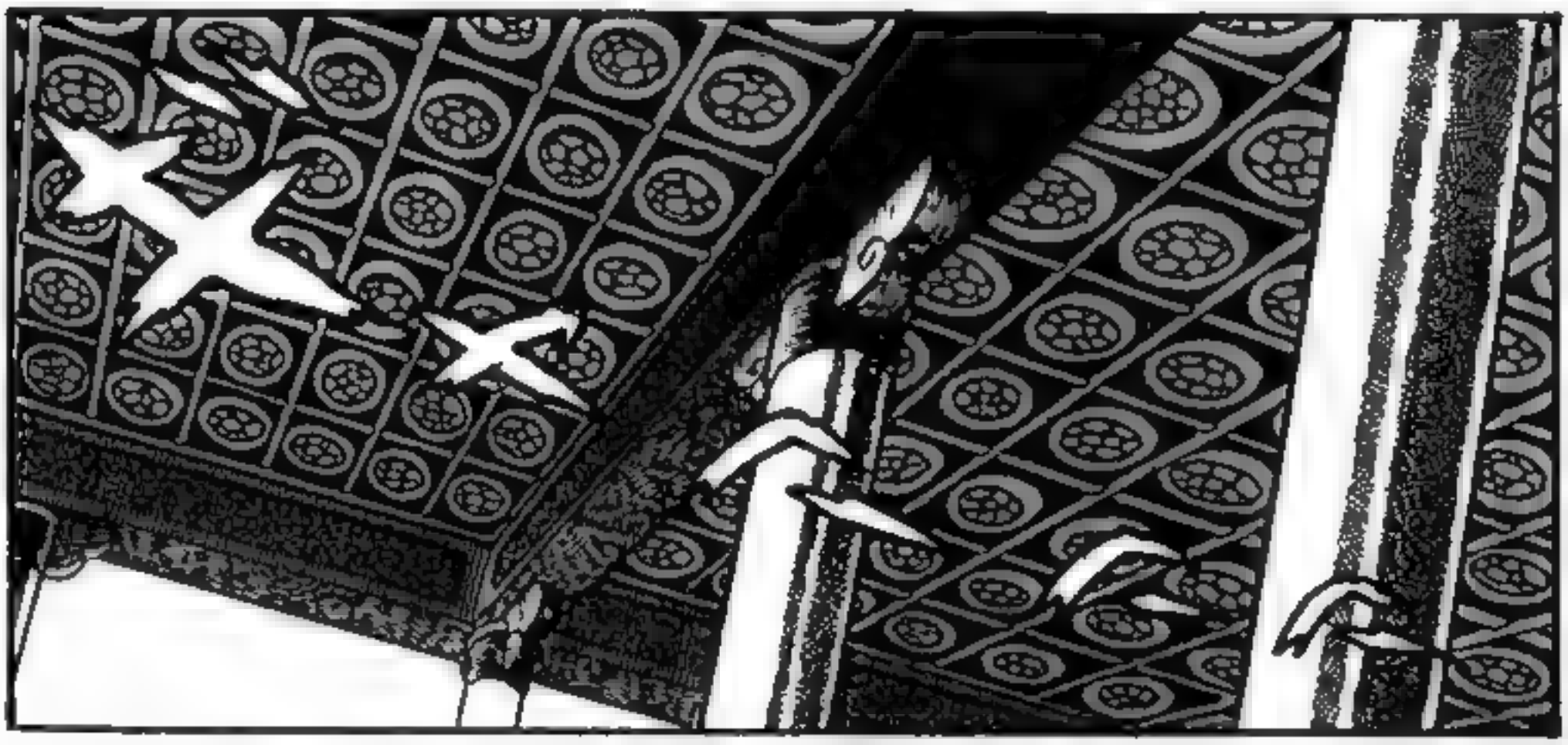
ズルズル

HAHAHA...



?
?

I BRING TO THE ESTEEMED CHANCELLOR, THE SPECIALLY REQUESTED DISH.

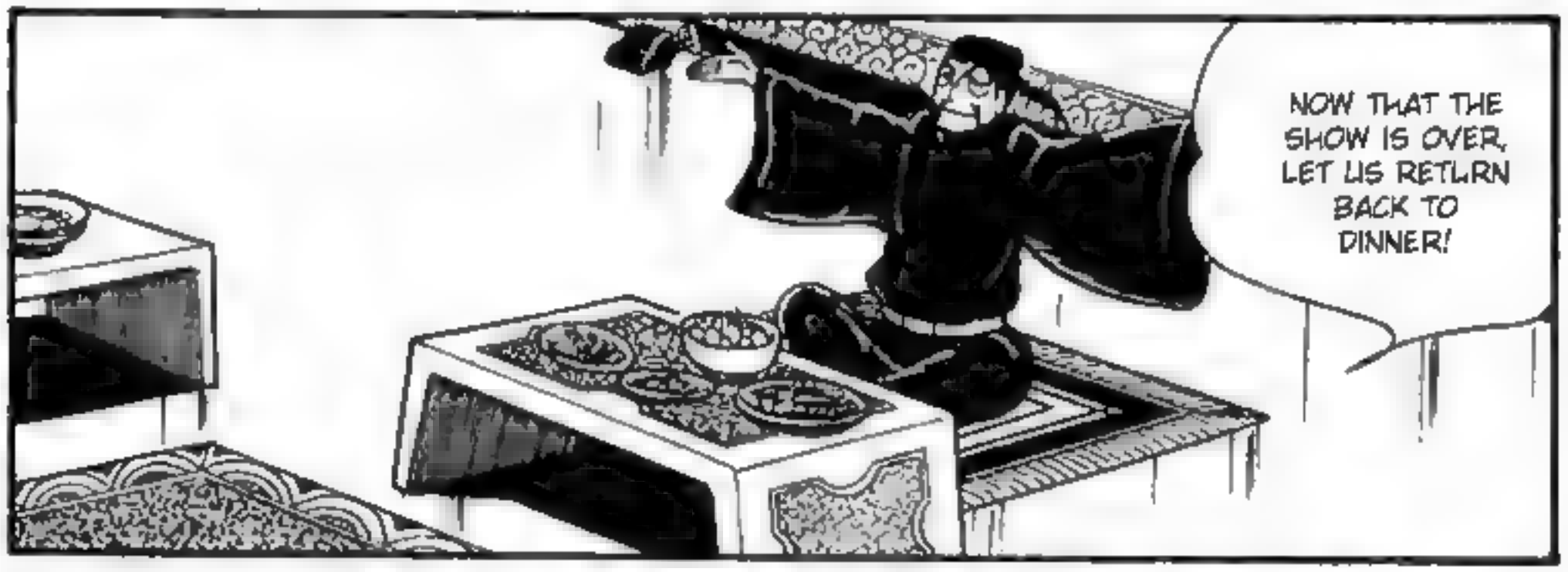
GUH!

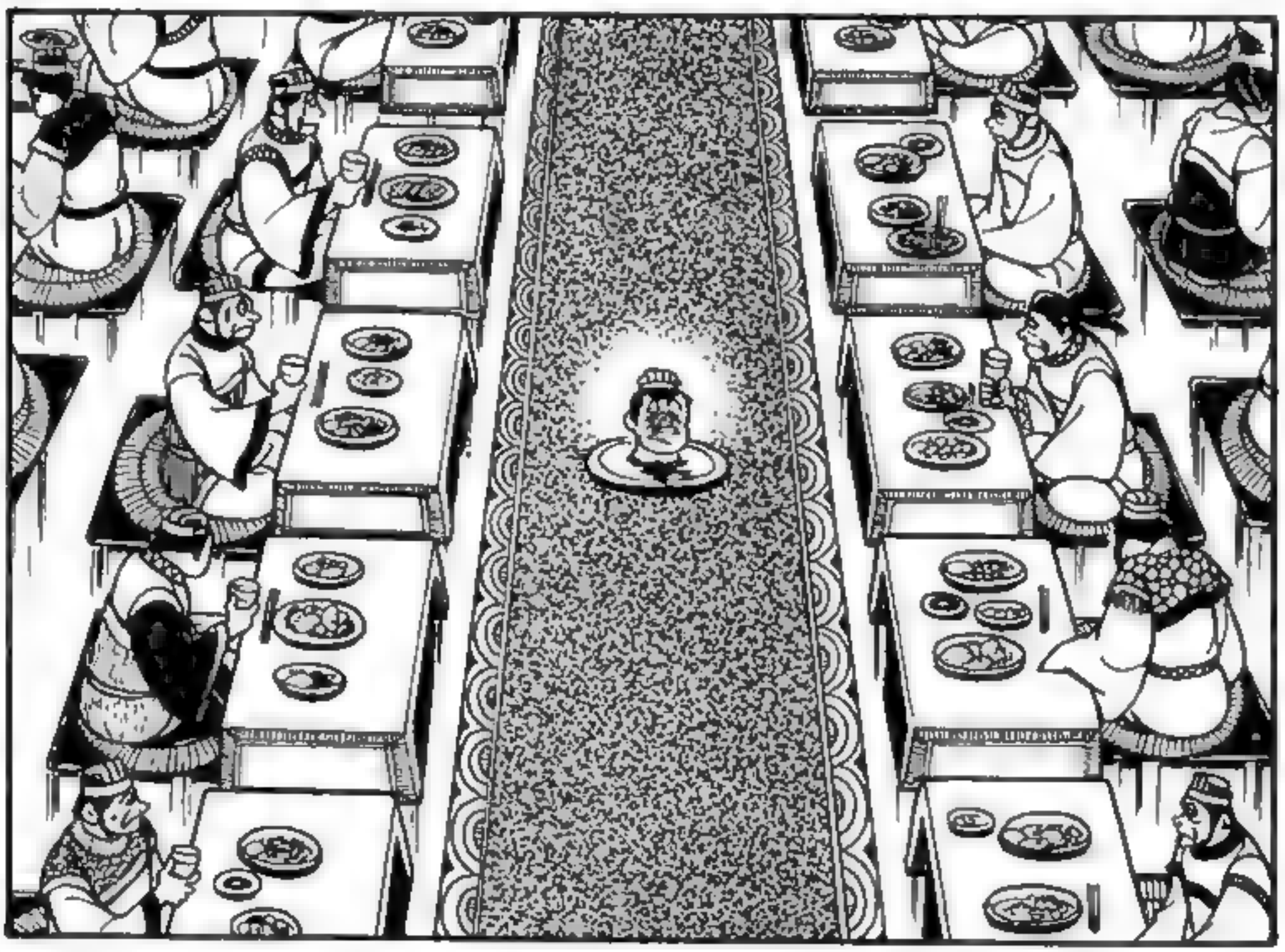
AHHH!

AGHH!

I ASSUME THAT THERE IS NO MORE AMONG YOU HERE THAT STILL WISH TO GO AGAINST ME?

THE MINISTER ZHANG WEN WAS SECRETLY PLOTTING WITH YUAN SHU AND SO I PUNISHED HIM.


NOW THAT THE SHOW IS OVER, LET US RETURN BACK TO DINNER!



RESIDENCE OF WANG YUN, THE MINISTER OF THE MASSES

SOME READERS MIGHT RECALL THE NAME WANG YUN. HE WAS THE MAN WHO ENTRUSTED CAO CAO WITH THE SEVEN STAR BLADE FOR HIS FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON DONG ZHUO

HMM?

I WAS WORRIED ABOUT SIR.

DIAO CHAN? WHAT ARE YOU DOING AWAKE AT THIS HOUR?

MOREOVER, SIR SILENTLY GAZES AT THE MOON AND SHEDS TEARS ON NIGHTS SUCH AS THIS...

YES. THERE IS A VERY WORN OUT EXPRESSION ON MY MASTER'S FACE AT ALL TIMES THESE DAYS...

WORRIED ABOUT ME...?

I ONLY WISH TO REPAY THE KINDNESS THAT I HAVE BEEN BESTOWED WITH.

I WAS SOLD TO SIR AS A SLAVE WHEN I WAS BUT A CHILD. YET SIR HAS GRACIOUSLY TREATED AND RAISED ME AS MORE OF A DAUGHTER THAN A SLAVE.

SO PLEASE, WHAT TROUBLES MY MASTER'S HEART TO THIS EXTENT?

IS THAT HOW I APPEAR TO YOUR EYES THESE DAYS?

YES. MY MASTER'S SORROWFUL EXPRESSION IS ENOUGH TO BREAK MY HEART.

I WOULD EVEN GLADLY OFFER MY LIFE IF IT COULD HELP RELIEVE MY MASTER'S WORRIES. SO PLEASE, TELL THIS LOWLY DIAO CHAN WHAT TROUBLES MY MASTER SO.

WITH THE CURRENT SITUATION, IT SHAN'T BE LONG BEFORE DONG ZHUO CLAIMS THE THRONE FOR HIMSELF.

I WAS CONCERNED OVER THE EMPEROR'S BLEAK FUTURE.

BUT NO MATTER HOW MUCH I WORRY, I AM NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. THAT IS WHY I CANNOT HELP BUT SHED MY TEARS.

FURTHERMORE, DONG ZHUO HAS THE CRAFTY LI RU AND THE MIGHTY LU BU AIDING HIM. WHEREVER DONG ZHUO IS, LU BU IS BOUND TO BE NEAR, MAKING ASSASSINATION IMPOSSIBLE

NOT ONLY THAT, HE IS EVER WATCHFUL OF ANY TRAITOROUS MAN PLOTTING HIS DOWNFALL.

DONG ZHUO'S HAS BECOME MUCH TOO POWERFUL FOR ANYONE TO BRING HIM DOWN NOW.

IS THERE NO HOPE OF BRINGING DOWN THE WICKED DONG ZHUO?

WHAT!?

WHAT IF ONE WERE TO SOUR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DONG ZHUO AND LU BU?

DIAO CHAN, JUST WHAT ARE YOU SCHEMING!?

WHISPER WHISPER

I HAVE A PLAN TO SPLIT DONG ZHUO AND LU BU APART.

THIS IS THE LEAST I, A MERE SLAVE, COULD DO FOR HER GRACIOUS MASTER.

YES, MASTER.

DIAO CHAN, ARE YOU SERIOUS ABOUT THIS!?

NO, SIR. IN FACT, I WOULD BE HONOURED IF YOU DID.

YOU DO NOT MIND... IF I USE YOU LIKE THIS?

SEVERAL DAYS AFTER

I WONDER WHAT THE MINISTER OF MASSES WOULD SEND TO ME?

WHAT? WANG YUN HAS SENT ME SOMETHING?

I HAD HEARD THAT THE WANG FAMILY LOST MANY OF THEIR PRICELESS TREASURE DURING THE MOVE TO CHANG'AN BUT...

WHAT A MAGNIFICENT CROWN!!!

I CANNOT JUST SIMPLY STAND HERE AND ADMIRE THE GIFT! I MUST GO AND SAY AT LEAST A WORD OF THANKS!

IS MINISTER WANG YUN HERE!?
AH, MINISTER WANG YUN.
OHH, GENERAL LU BU! WHAT A DELIGHT IT IS TO HAVE YOU VISIT.

COME ON SERVANTS! THE ESTEEMED GENERAL HAS GRACED US WITH HIS PRESENCE SO LET US WELCOME HIM WITH THE UTMOST CARE!

PLEASE, I INSIST YOU ENJOY THE FOOD TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT!

HMM...

BEFORE THAT, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK SIR ONE QUESTION. I AM MERELY A GENERAL SERVING THE CHANCELLOR, WHILE SIR IS THE MINISTER OF THE MASSES, ONE OF THE HIGHEST RANKING MINISTERS IN THIS COUNTRY. FOR WHAT REASON DOES SIR TREAT ME SO COURTEOUSLY FOR?

I NEVER KNEW SIR FELT THAT WAY TOWARDS ME!

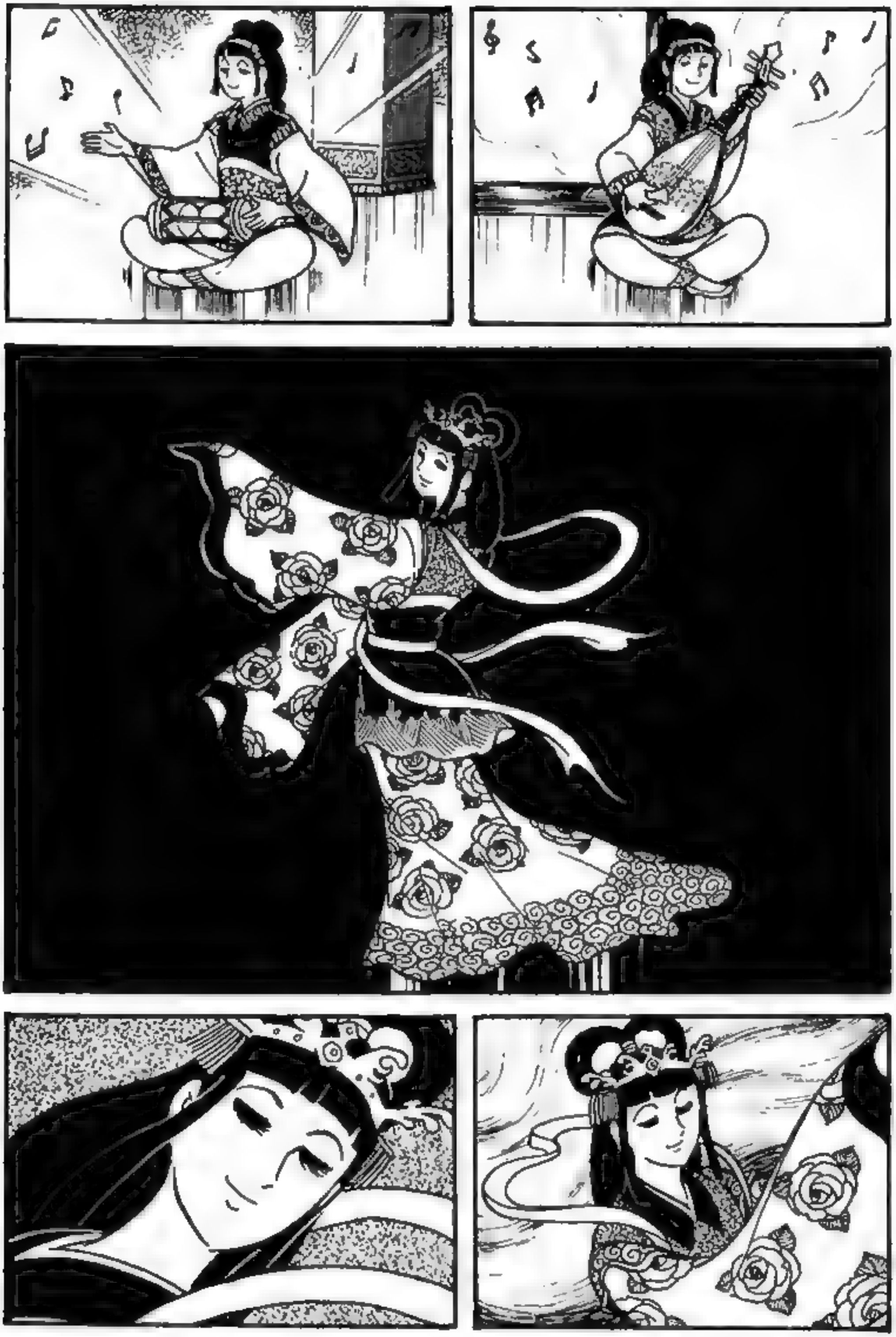
NOW, NOW, DRINKS AND FOOD ALONE WON'T DO. ENTERTAIN THE GENERAL WITH A DANCE!

FOR LONG HAVE I ADMIRED GENERAL LU BU'S VALOUR AND SKILL IN THE BATTLEFIELD. WHY, I WOULD CONSIDER IT A GREAT HONOUR FOR THE WANG FAMILY JUST TO HOUSE THE FAMOUS RED HARE IN OUR STABLES!

AH, GO RIGHT AHEAD, DIAO CHAN.

PLEASE ALLOW ME...

OHHH!



AN ANGEL, SHE IS...!

WHAT A BEAUTY ...

I HOPE MY DANCE HAS PLEASED THE GENERAL.

YES, OF COURSE! YOUR DANCING WAS TRULY SPLENDID!

YES.

YOU SHOULD COME CLOSER AND POUR THE GENERAL A DRINK.

WELL HOW FORTUNATE THIS IS! IT SEEMS THAT THE GENERAL HAS TAKEN A LIKING TO YOUR DANCING, DIAO CHAN!

Y-YES, THANK YOU.
HERE YOU GO, GENERAL.

OF COURSE. WHAT MAN WOULD NOT LIKE A GRACEFUL AND BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN SUCH AS HER?

DOES THE GENERAL LIKE MY DAUGHTER, DIAO CHAN?

I WOULD BE HONOURED
WELL THEN, WHY DON'T WE HAVE DIAO CHAN LIVE AT THE GENERAL'S HOME AND ATTEND TO HIS NEEDS?

OF COURSE NOT. I MEANT WHAT I SAID.

DOES SIR JEST OR...?

I CANNOT THANK SIR ENOUGH!

OHHH!!!

BUT FIRST, I SHALL WAIT FOR AN AUSPISCIOUS DAY TO SEND MY DAUGHTER OVER TO THE GENERAL'S HOME.

THEN I SHALL AWAIT FOR SIR'S DAUGHTER IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

THANK YOU MINISTER WANG YUN. I HAVE NEVER SPENT SUCH A JOYOUS DAY BEFORE!

IT IS A GREAT RELIEF TO SEE CHANCELLOR DONG ZHUO AS HEALTHY AS EVER.

AH, GOOD DAY, MINISTER WANG YUN.

FOR HE IS BUSY WITH JUSTLY GOVERNING OUR NATION EVERYDAY.

BUT EVEN SO, I AM SURE THAT THE CHANCELLOR IS A LITTLE TIRED,

OHHH!

THERE COULD BE NO GREATER HONOUR FOR ME THAN TO HAVE SIR VISIT MY HOME.

AND SO I WISH TO RELIEVE THE CHANCELLOR'S FATIGUE BY INVITING SIR TO A PRIVATE BANQUET TO BE HELD IN MY HOME.

THEN I SHALL AWAIT YOUR ARRIVAL TONIGHT.

HOW COULD I TURN DOWN THE REQUEST OF THE MINISTER OF THE MASSES!? I SHALL GLADLY ATTEND.

I AM SURE IT IS A SIGN THAT EVEN WANG YUN HAS ACKNOWLEDGED SIR AS THE FUTURE EMPEROR.
HAHA, TO THINK THAT AN ELDER STATESMAN SUCH AS WANG YUN WOULD PERSONALLY INVITE ME TO HIS HOME... WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT, LI RU?

IT IS WITH GREAT HONOUR THAT I WELCOME CHANCELLOR DONG ZHUO TO MY HUMBLE HOME.

THANK YOU.

THIS WAY, CHANCELLOR.

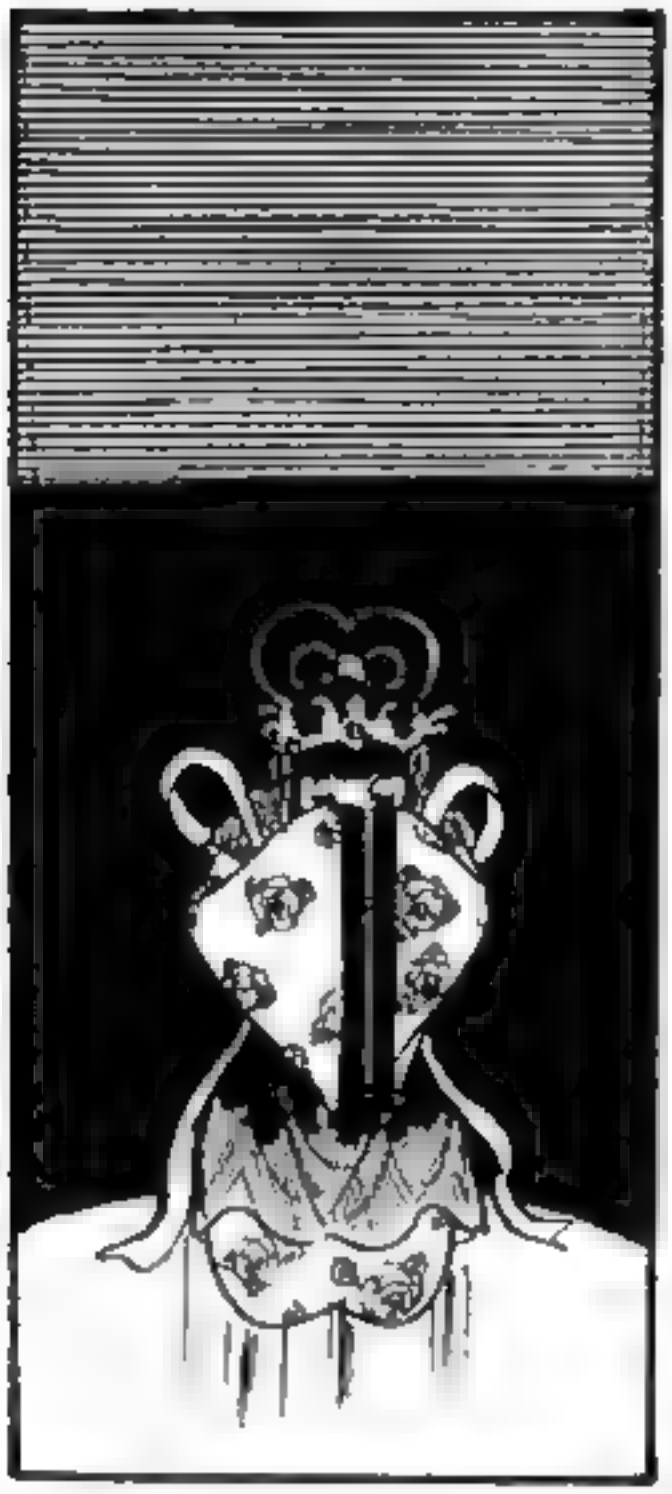
I HOPE IT IS FITTING TO SIR'S TASTE...

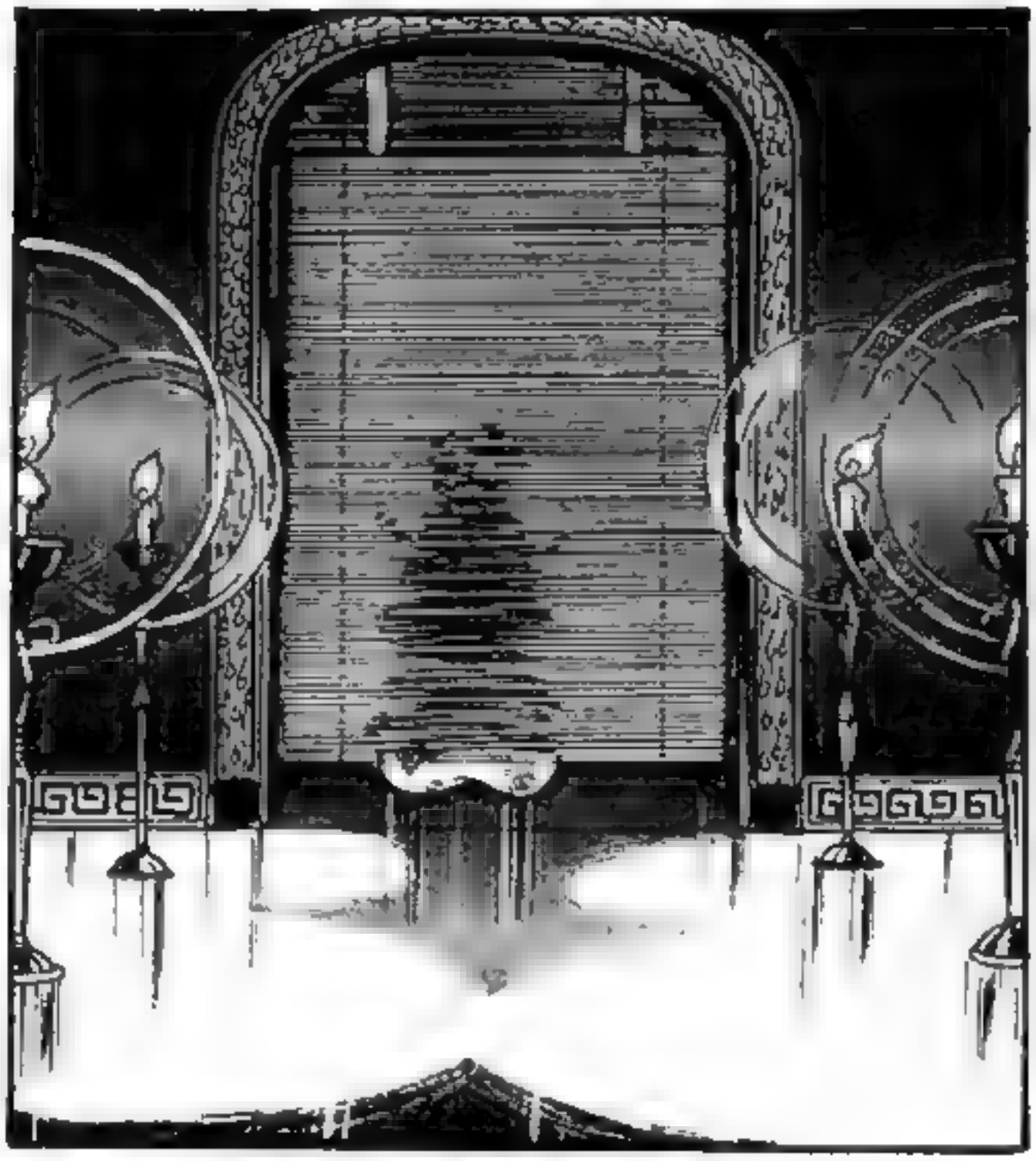
MMN, WHAT A GRANDIOSE FEAST YOU'VE PREPARED!

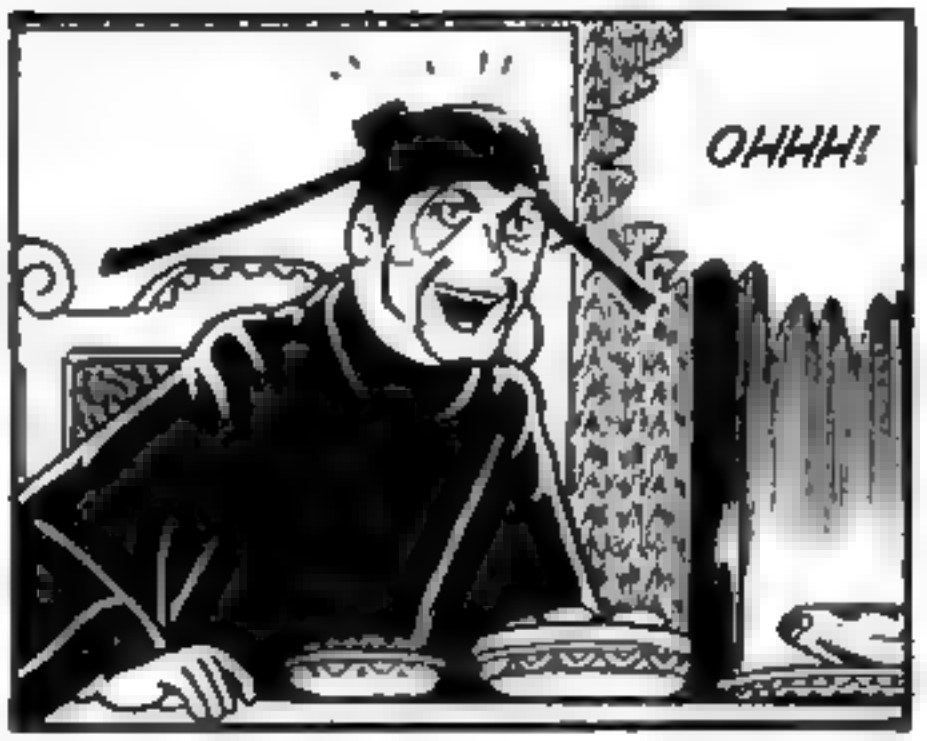
THANK YOU, SIR.

I'LL BE SURE TO KEEP BOTH YOU AND THE WANG FAMILY IN GOOD FORTUNE SHOULD I CONTINUE TO RISE HIGHER IN MY POSITION.

HMM?
IT IS JUST MY DAUGHTER WHO WISHES TO PRESENT SIR WITH HER DANCE.
WANG YUN, WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?
AH, I NEVER KNEW YOU HAD A DAUGHTER.

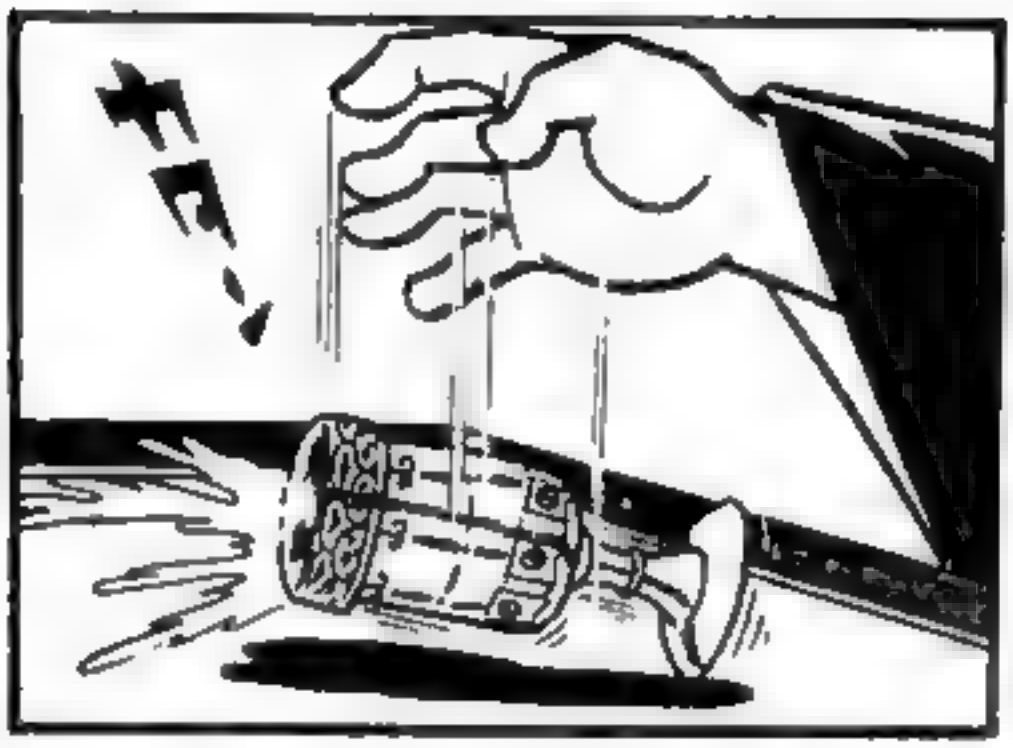






WHILE DIAO CHAN WAS DANCING, A SINGLE TEARDROP FLOWED DOWN HER CHEEK JUST WHAT COULD HAVE HER TEARDROP SIGNIFIED.. ?

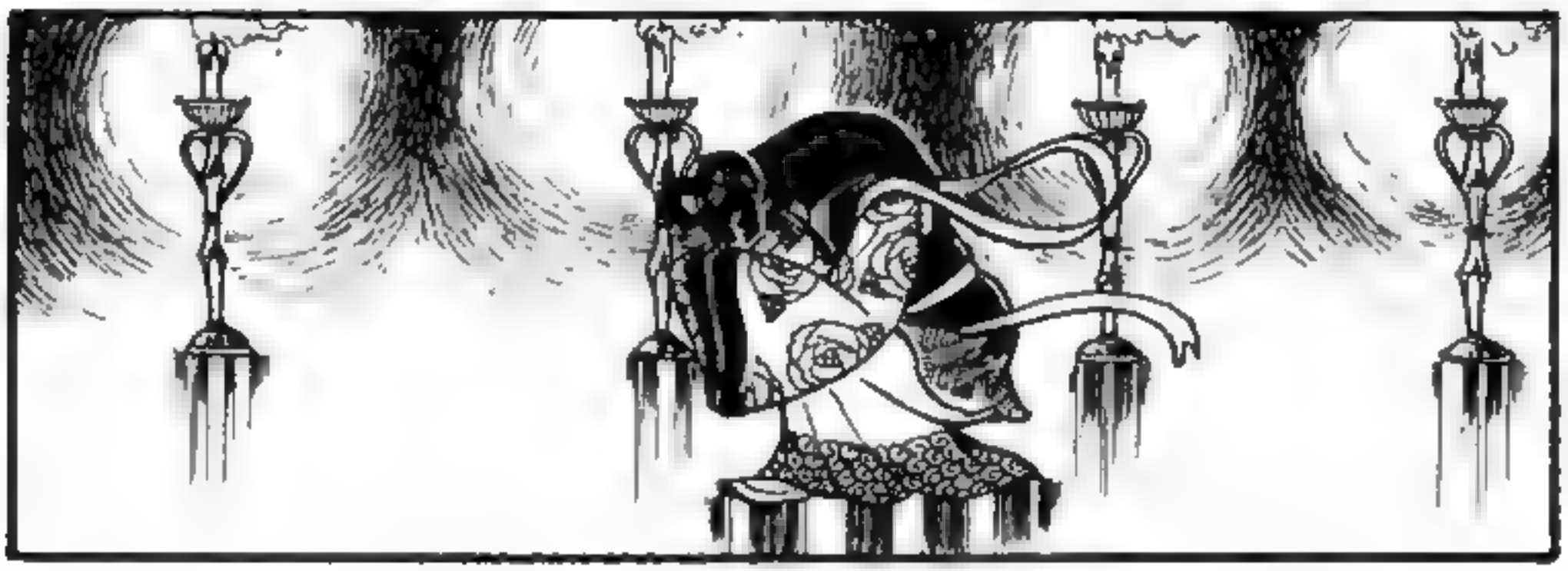
FISSURE


FF-

BUT SUCH BEAUTY ...!

PLEASE EXCUSE ME FOR THAT.

I WOULD LOVE TO HAVE HER WITH ME.



I INISIST YOU COME AND POUR ME A DRINK!

A MAGNIFI-CENT DANCE, I SAY!

I WOULD BE HON-OURED.

WANG YUN, I WOULD NEVER HAVE SUS-PECTED YOU TO HAVE SUCH A LOVELY DAUGHTER.

IF IT IS ALRIGHT, I SHALL GLADLY SEND HER OVER TO SIR'S HOME.

IT PLEASES BOTH DIAO CHAN AND I THAT SIR HAS TAKEN SUCH A LIKING TO MY DAUGHTER.

NO, FATHER.

OF COURSE, DIAO CHAN, I ASSUME YOU HAVE NO COMPLAINTS EITHER?

REALLY!?

YES, OF COURSE.

THEN WOULD IT BE ALRIGHT TO TAKE HER WITH ME TONIGHT?

AHAHAHAHA! GOOD, GOOD!

I COULD NOT BE HAPPIER, CHANCELLOR.

I'LL BE SURE TO TREAT YOU WELL, DIAO CHAN.

THANK YOU FOR THE WONDERFUL NIGHT, WANG YUN!

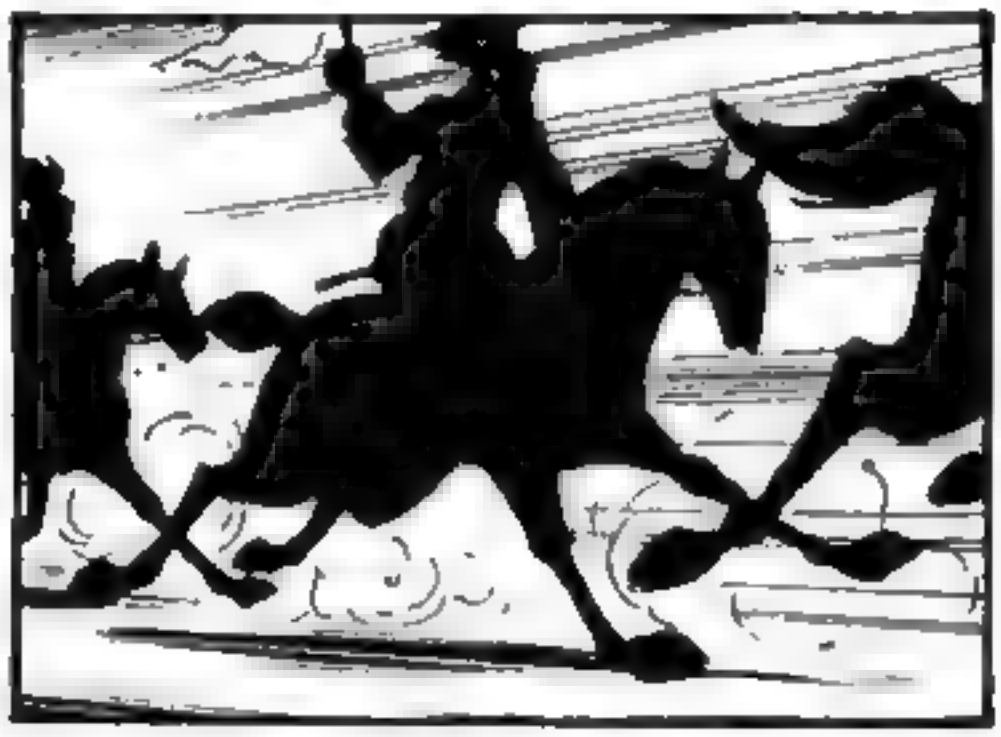
THEN LET US GO, DIAO CHAN.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH, SIR.

I HAVE WELL NOTED YOUR LOYALTY. I SHALL GLADLY SUPPORT YOU WITH ANYTHING FROM NOW.

YES...

I SHALL TAKE MY LEAVE THEN. GOOD NIGHT, FATHER.



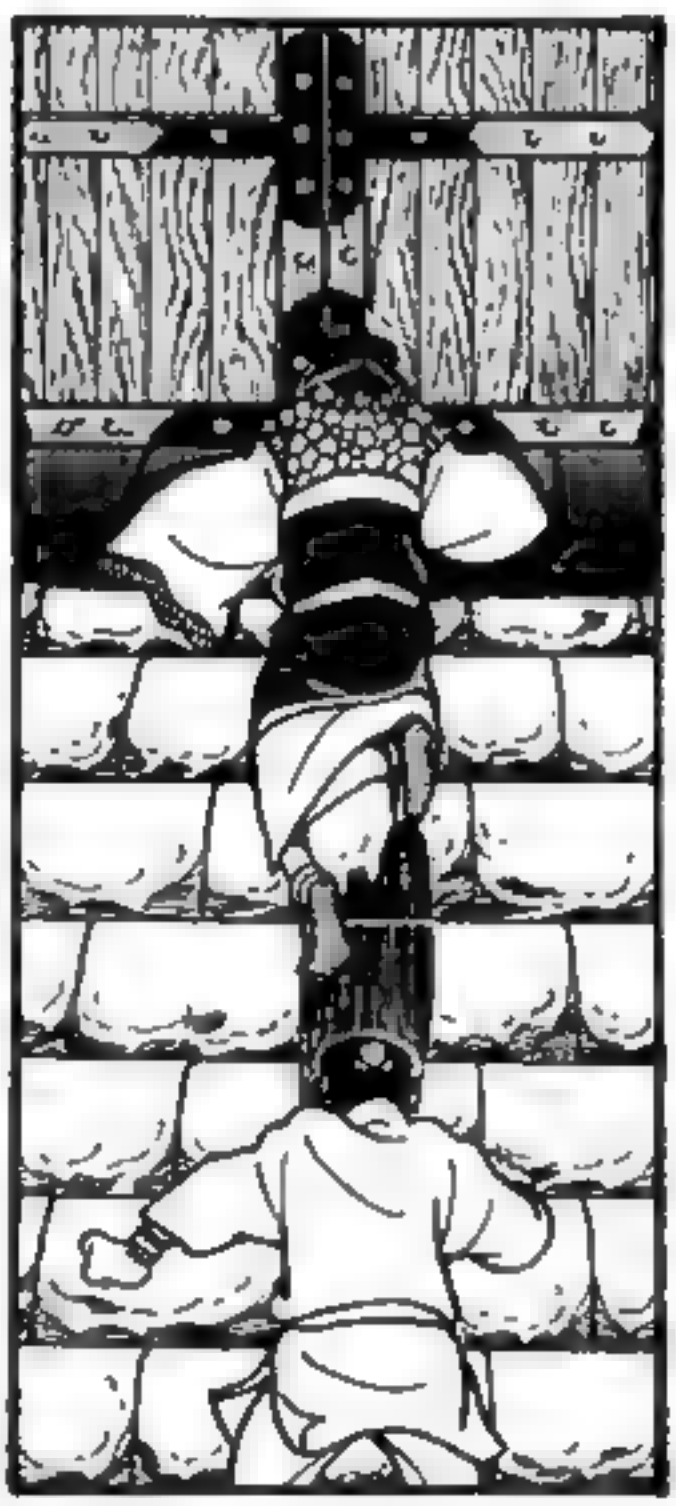
WANG YUN, ARE YOU THERE!?

MASTER!

SO HE'S COME ..

GENERAL LU BU AND HIS SOLDIERS HAVE COME DEMANDING FOR SIR!

OPEN THE GATES AND LET HIM IN.



AH, GOOD EVENING GENERAL. WHAT BRINGS YOU TO MY HOME AT THIS HOUR?

WANG YUN, WHERE ARE YOU!?

WHAT? WHY IS THE GENERAL SO UPSET?

YOU CON-NIVING OLD MAN...!

A MESSENGER JUST INFORMED ME THAT YOU GAVE DIAO CHAN TO DONG ZHUO!

Y-YOU ARE MISTAKEN...

WHAT HAP-PENED TO OUR PROMISE!?

LET ME SHOW WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO MAKE A FOOL OUT OF ME!

SILENCE!

WHAT!

I DID NOT GIVE MY DAUGHTER TO THE CHAN-CELLOR!

PLEASE CALM DOWN, GENERAL!

HE SAID HE WISHED TO PERSONALLY ARRANGE A BANQUET IN WHICH HE WOULD PRESENT HER AND FORMALLY BETROTH HER TO GENERAL LU BU.

AT THE BANQUET I HELD FOR THE CHANCELLOR TONIGHT, I TOLD THE CHANCELLOR THAT I HAD BETROTHED MY DAUGHTER DIAO CHAN TO GENERAL LU BU. HEARING THAT, HE ASKED ME TO ENTRUST DIAO CHAN TO HIM TEMPORARILY.

THE CHANCELLOR MERELY WISHED TO SEE GENERAL LU BU'S SURPRISED FACE.

WHAT!

PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR MY ACTIONS...

I AM SURE THE CHANCELLOR SHALL HOLD A MAGNIFICENT BANQUET TO PRESENT DIAO CHAN TO YOU WITHIN DUE TIME.

NO, NO. THERE IS NO NEED FOR THE GENERAL TO APOLOGIZE.

PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR MY RASH IMPUDENCE.

YOUR DAUGHTER'S BEAUTY HAS NOT LEFT MY MIND FOR A SECOND EVER SINCE I LAID MY EYES UPON HER.

HAHA...

ALRIGHT MEN, LET US HEAD BACK.

AND PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR INTRUDING UPON YOU AT THIS LATE IN THE NIGHT.

NO, NO. IN FACT, I AM PLEASED TO HEAR THAT THE GENERAL CARES SO MUCH ABOUT MY DAUGHTER.

I JUST CAN'T STOP THINK-ING OF DIAO CHAN.

I MUST SEE HER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

AT THIS EARLY IN THE MORNING?

I SHALL HEAD OUT TO MEIWO.

HAHAHA!

IT SEEMS SIR IS QUITE INFATUATED WITH DIAO CHAN.

MEIWO
CASTLE

AH, GOOD MORNING, GENERAL. IT'S RARE TO SEE YOU HERE SO EARLY.

IT SEEMS THAT HE IS STILL IN BED WITH A BEAUTIFUL GIRL THAT WANG YUN PRESENTED TO HIM LAST NIGHT.

HE IS STILL IN BED, SIR.

AND THE CHANCELLOR?

ARE YOU ACQUAINTED WITH HER, SIR?

A-ARE YOU TALKING OF DIAO CHAN!?

WHA!

?

DONG ZHUO AND DIAO CHAN... IN THE SAME BED...!

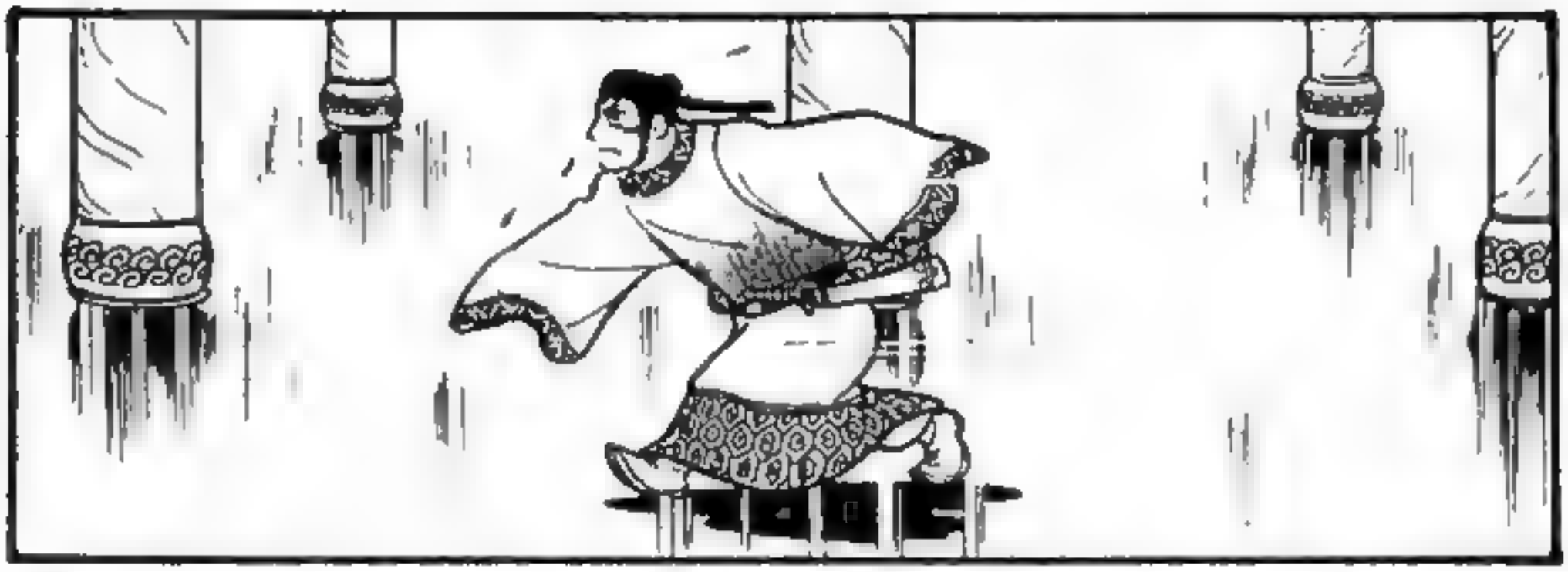
IS SOMETHING THE MATTER, GENERAL?

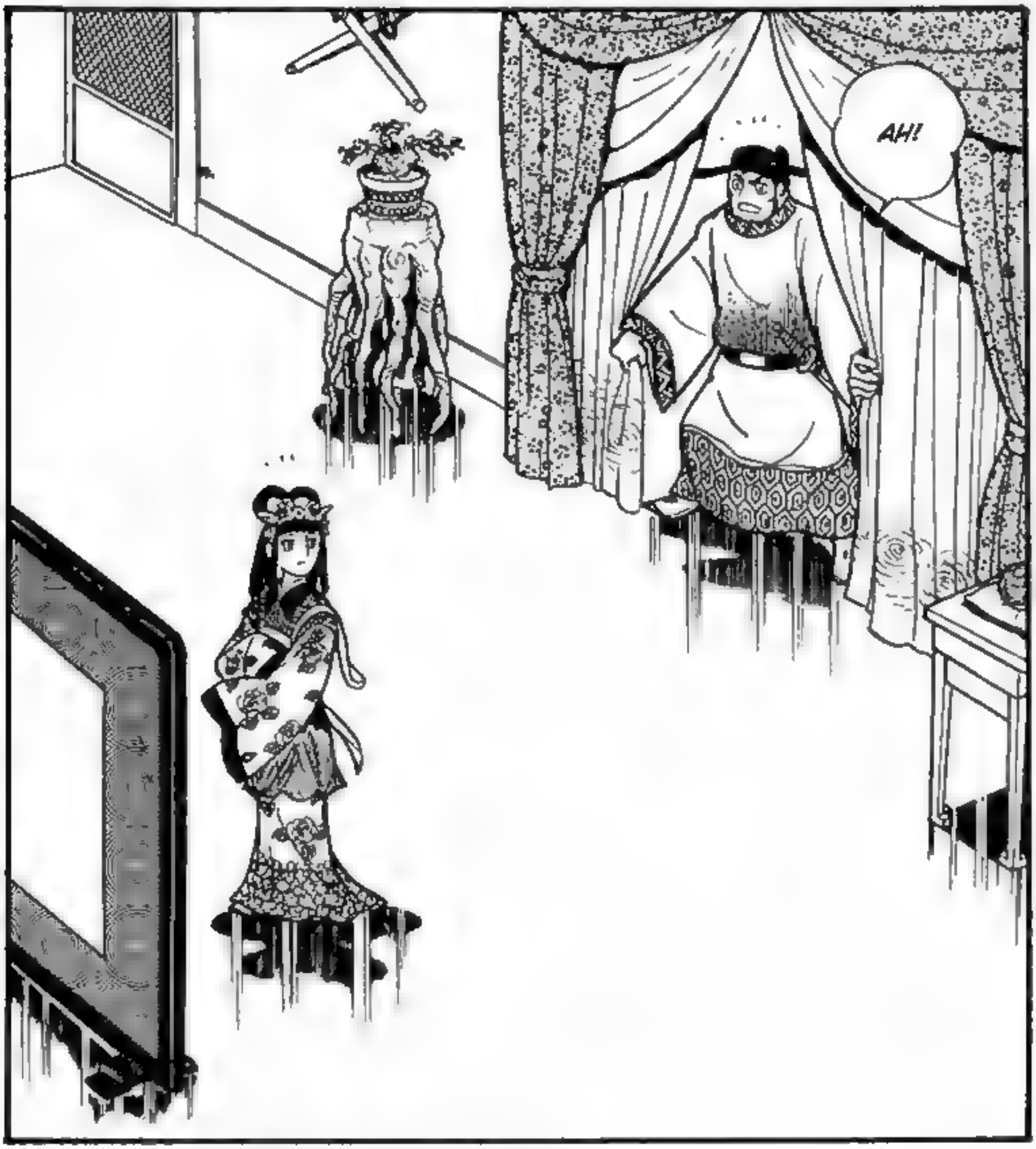
HAS THE CHANCELLOR STILL NOT AWOKEN YET!?

NOT YET, SIR.

GENERAL, THE CHANCELLOR HAS WOKEN UP NOW.

ARGHHH!




AH!

DIAO CHAN ...

GENERAL ...

DIAO CHAN, IS SOMEONE THERE?

I'M AFRAID I CANNOT DISOBEY THE CHANCELLOR'S WISHES...

LU BU...?

YES, IT'S GENERAL LU BU.

A-AH...

AND JUST WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE IN MY SLEEPING QUARTERS SO EARLY IN THE MORNING, LU BU?

YOU IDIOT, JUST WHO IN THEIR RIGHT MINDS WOULD BELIEVE SUCH A RIDICULOUS DREAM AND COME RUNNING OVER?

I HAD AN OMINOUS DREAM IN WHICH SIR FELL DEATHLY ILL...

YES, SIR.

NOW LEAVE IF THERE'S NOTHING MORE TO SAY!

GENERAL, IT IS NOT GOOD FOR SIR'S HEALTH TO BE DRINKING SO MUCH EVERYDAY...

AND IT MIGHT BE BEST TO VISIT MEIWO SOON...

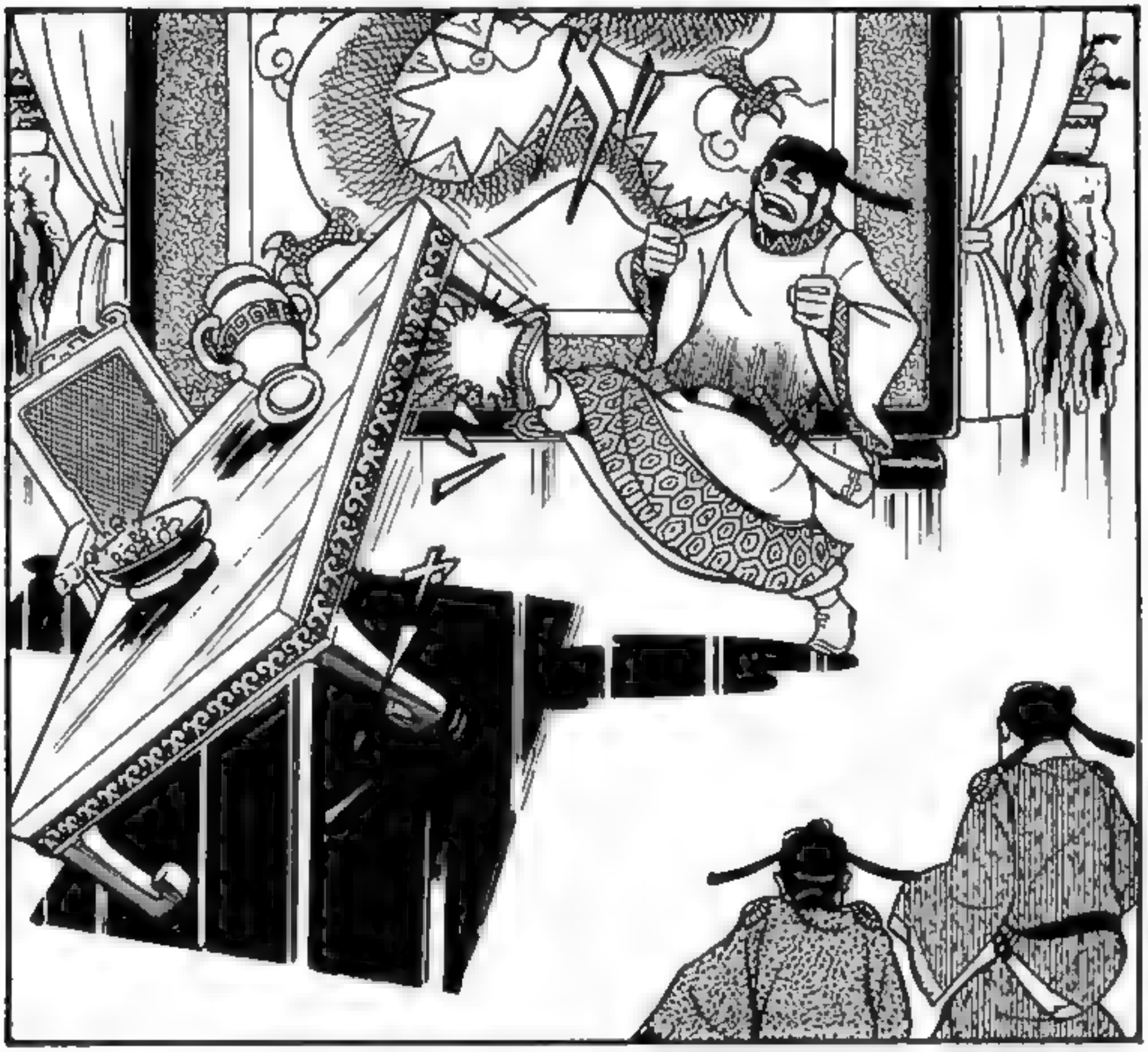
WINE! BRING ME MORE WINE!

JUST WHY SHOULD I GO AND VISIT THAT LECHER-OUS BEAST!?

SHUT UP!

AND YET HE STILL ...

IS IT NOT BECAUSE I HAVE VANQUISHED HIS ENEMIES AND KEPT GUARD OVER HIM...!?
JUST WHO DO YOU THINK GOT DONG ZHUO TO WHERE HE IS!



GENERAL, THE CHANCELLOR SEEMS TO HAVE FALLEN ILL.

WHAT DO I CARE!

HMPH. THAT'S WHAT DRINKING ALL DAY WITH WOMEN WILL DO TO YOUR HEALTH!

AND WHY IS THAT?

I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BEST IF THE GENERAL WENT AND MADE A VISIT.

DONG ZHUO IS CHANCELLOR THANKS TO GENERAL LU BU, AND LU BU IS GENERAL THANKS TO CHANCELLOR DONG ZHUO.

WHAT WOULD THE WORLD THINK IF THE CHANCELLOR'S TRUSTED SUBORDINATE DID NOT EVEN VISIT HIM WHEN HE WAS SICK?

YES, SIR.

THEN THERE MAY BE MANY PEOPLE WHO WILL ATTEMPT TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO LIKE IN THE PAST. IS THAT WHAT YOU MEAN?

IF A RUMOUR OF A FISSURE DEVELOPING BETWEEN SIR'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHANCELLOR WERE TO SPREAD, THEN. .

HMM...

ALRIGHT, I SHALL GO PAY HIM A VISIT TOMORROW

YOU DO BRING UP A GOOD POINT.

CHANCELLOR, GENERAL LU BU HAS COME TO PAY A VISIT.

AH, LU BU. IT'S BEEN QUITE SOME TIME SINCE I LAST SAW YOU.

YES, UNFORTU-NATELY SIR.

I HEARD THAT EVEN YOU WEREN'T IN THE BEST OF HEALTH THESE DAYS.

COUGH
COUGH
COUGH

IT SEEMS THAT I, TOO, HAVE BECOME MUCH WEAKER. I LONG FOR MY YOUTH WHEN I RODE ALL ACROSS THIS LAND ON MY HORSE.

CHANCELLOR, ARE YOU ALRIGHT?
COUGH

I SHALL GO BRING SOME COLD WATER.

NO, ALLOW ME.

IT IS SO PAINFUL TO MY HEART.

DIAO CHAN ..

TO SPEND MY DAYS WITH A MAN I HAVE NO AFFECTIONS FOR AND TO BE KEPT AWAY FROM YOU, MY BELOVED GENERAL... AT THE VERY LEAST, PLEASE COME HERE MORE OFTEN SO THAT I MAY SEE YOUR FACE.

WHAT ARE YOU TWO DOING OVER THERE!?

SILENCE! YOU DARE TRY TO WOO MY DIAO CHAN!?

N-NOTHING, SIR...

OR DO YOU TAKE ME FOR A BLIND MAN!?

DO YOU NOT KNOW WHO IS YOUR BENE-FACTOR!?

NO, SIR...

LEAVE! I DON'T EVER WANT TO SEE YOUR FACE HERE AGAIN!

IF THAT'S WHAT SIR WISHES .

GOOD DAY TO YOU TOO, LI RU.

GOOD DAY, GENERAL LU BU.

?

PLEASE EXCUSE ME.

I HAD HEARD YOU'VE BEEN FEELING A LITTLE UNDER THE WEATHER LATELY AS WELL...

AH, COME IN, LI RU.

CHANCELLOR, IT IS LI RU HERE TO PAY A VISIT.

THAT IMPUDENT BRUTE?

I CAME ACROSS LU BU ON MY WAY HERE AND HE WAS ACTING VERY ODD. DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?

THAT IS TROUBLING TO HEAR.

HE'S FORGOTTEN ALL I'VE DONE FOR HIM AND TRIED TO WOO MY PRECIOUS DIAO CHAN. AND SO I TOLD HIM TO NEVER SHOW HIS FACE HERE AGAIN.

WHAT?

CERTAINLY, LU BU WAS IN THE WRONG HERE BUT A MAN WITH GREAT ASPIRATIONS SUCH AS SIR MUST TREAT HIS SUBJECTS KINDLY AND FORGIVINGLY FOR IT WILL INSPIRE AN EVEN GREATER LOYALTY IN THEM.

BUT IF LU BU WERE TO EVER LEAVE SIR...

IF I WERE TO LET SUCH DISRESPECT SLIDE, THEN THE PROPER RELATION-SHIP OF LORD AND RETAINER WOULD CRUMBLE!

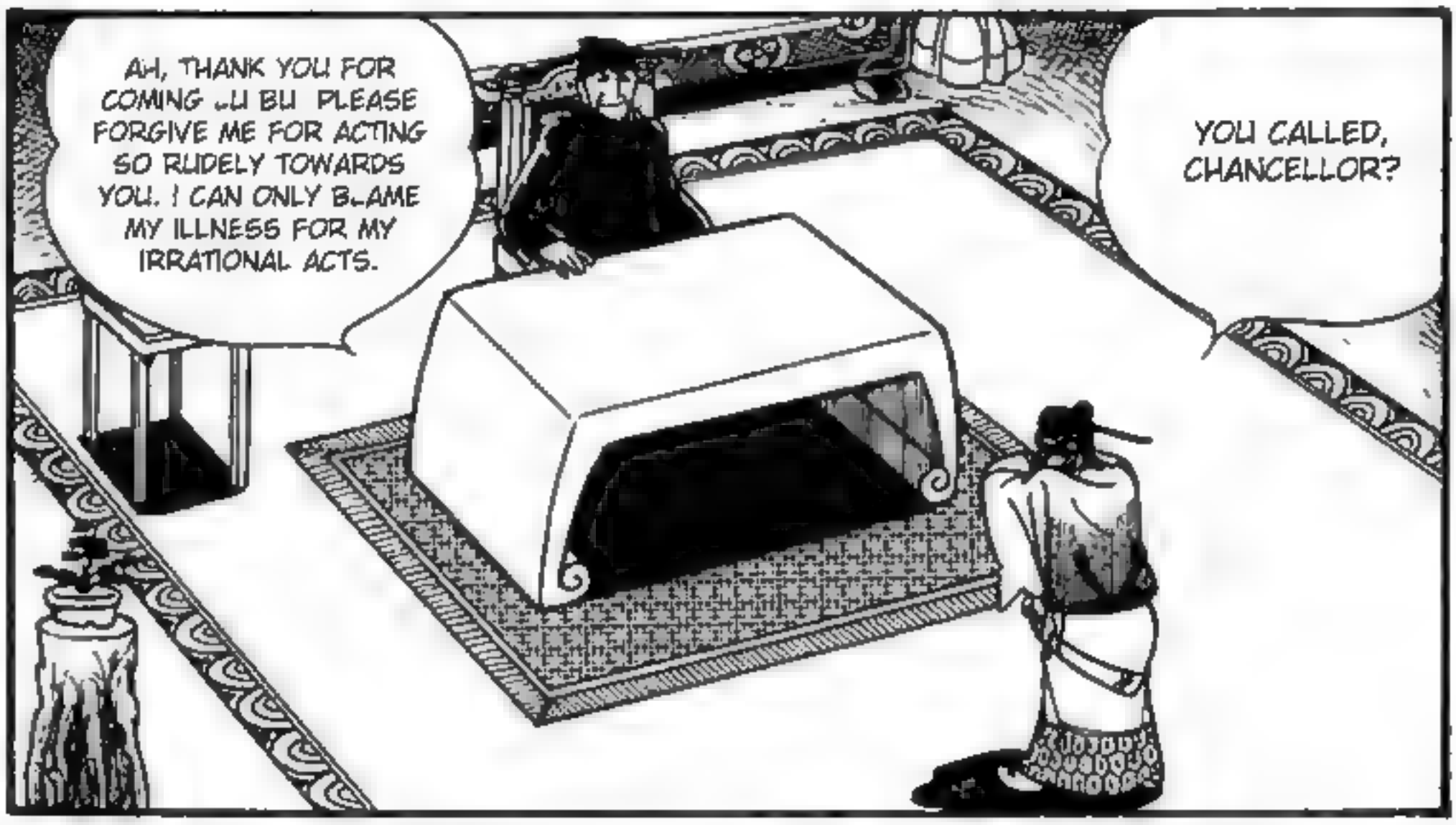
BUT I'VE ALREADY SAID TO HIM TO NEVER APPEAR AGAIN!

THAT IS TRUE, I CANNOT AFFORD TO LOSE HIM NOW...

LU BU IS CRUCIAL FOR THE REALIZA-TION OF SIR'S AMBITIONS!

THERE IS NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THAT, CHANCEL-LOR.

LU BU IS A SIMPLE MAN. IF YOU BESTOW HIM WITH TREASURES, HIS ANGER WILL SUBSIDE AND ALL WILL BE WELL ONCE MORE.

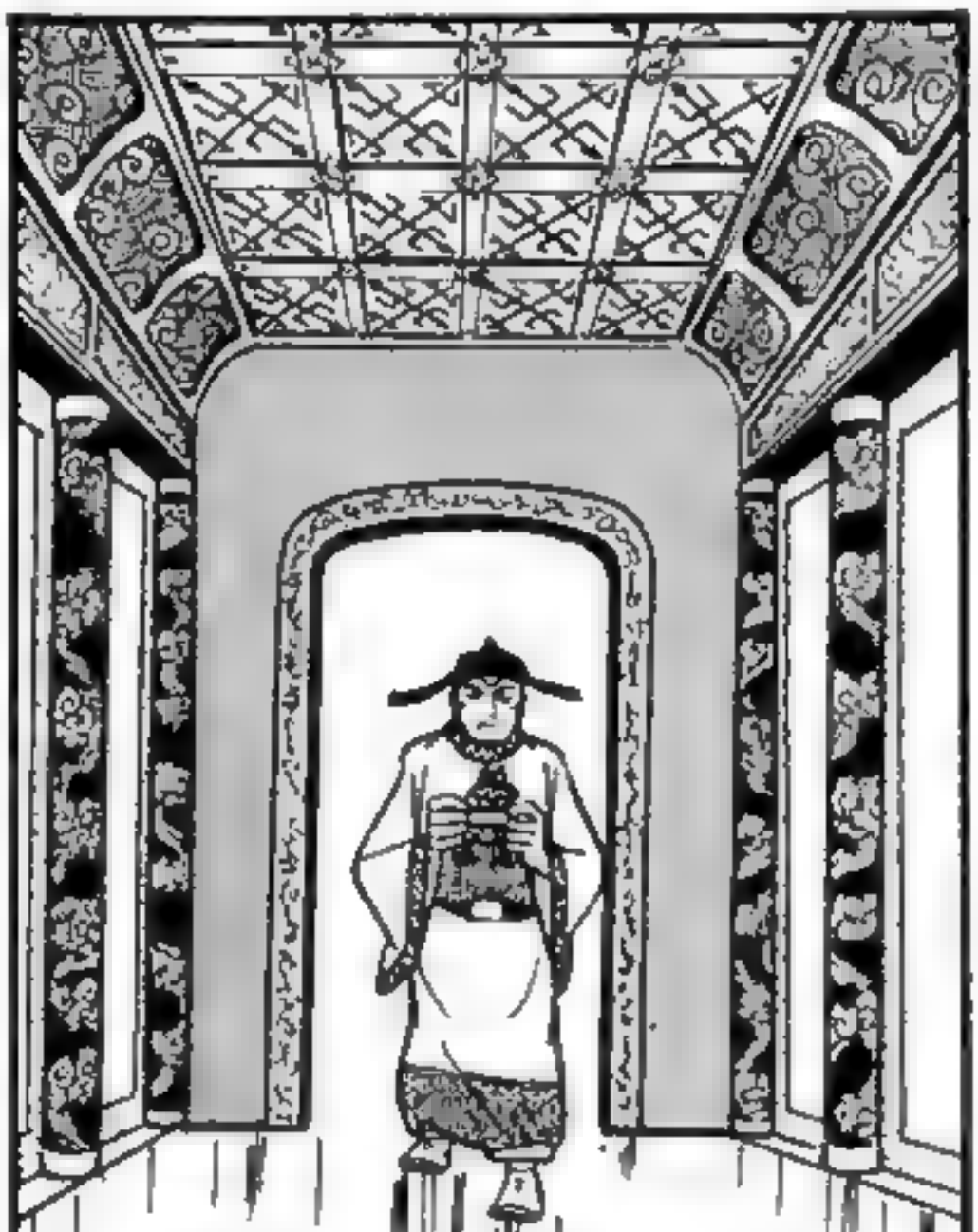

AH, THANK YOU FOR COMING LU BU. PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR ACTING SO RUDELY TOWARDS YOU. I CAN ONLY BLAME MY ILLNESS FOR MY IRRATIONAL ACTS.
YOU CALLED, CHANCELLOR?

PLEASE ACCEPT THESE GIFTS AS MY APOLOGY FOR YESTERDAY'S BEHAVIOUR.

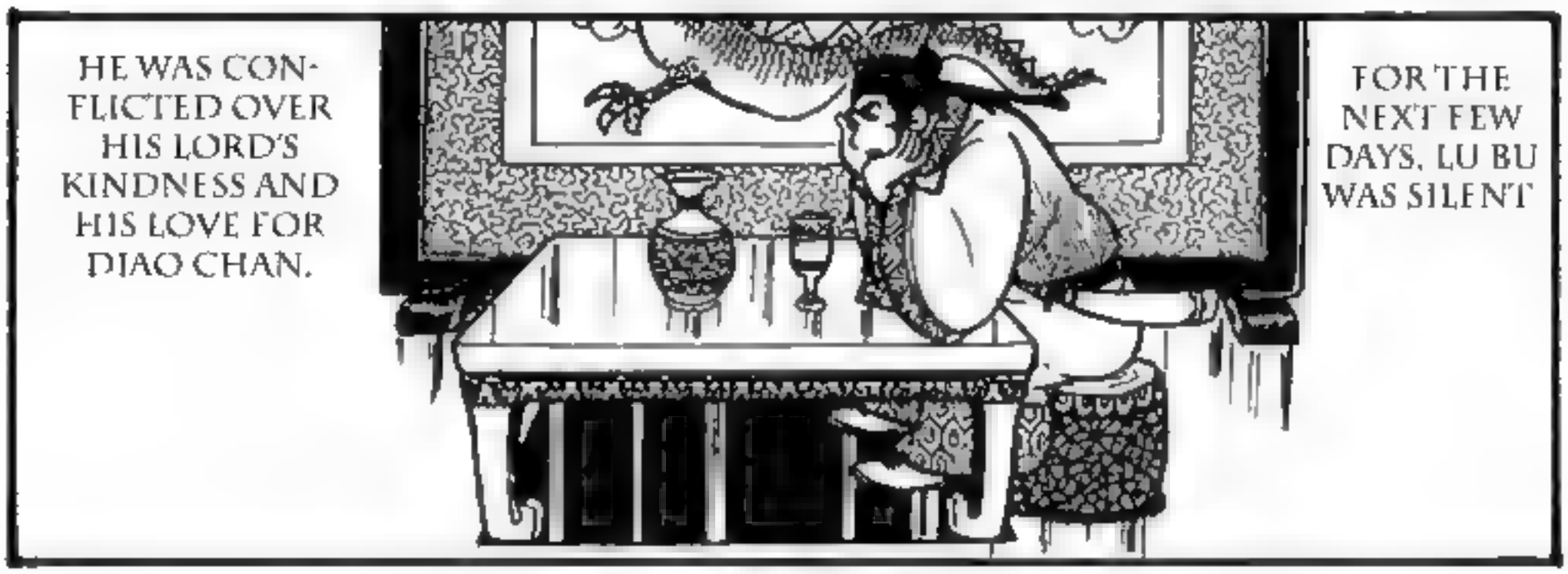
YOU ARE AN INDISPENSIBLE MAN TO ME. I HOPE WE COULD GO BACK TO HOW WE WERE BEFORE.

YES. I INSIST YOU ACCEPT THEM!

SIR IS GIVING THIS TO ME...?



GOOD.
ALL SHALL BE FINE WITH THAT.


HE WAS CONFLICTED OVER HIS LORD'S KINDNESS AND HIS LOVE FOR DIAO CHAN.
FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS, LU BU WAS SILENT

DIAO CHAN.

GENERAL LU BU!

GENERAL!

DIAO CHAN!

TRAPPED BETWEEN MY LORD'S KINDNESS AND MY LOVE FOR YOU, I FELT GUILTY AND CONFLICTED BEYOND ALL WORDS ..

'TIS THE SAME FOR ME.

I PAINFULLY LONGED SO MUCH TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

BUT I COULD NOT BEAR IT ANY LONGER AND I JUST HAD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

TO HEAR THAT THE GENERAL THINKS SO DEEPLY OF ME... I AM MOVED.

DIAO CHAN, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

I CAN NO LONGER BE WITH YOU, MY GENERAL.

BUT NOW, ALL I HAVE ARE SORROWS AND THIS SULLIED BODY OF MINE...

I ONCE HAD SUCH HAPPY DREAMS OF BECOMING YOUR WIFE...

ARE THOSE WORDS OF SINCERITY THE GENERAL SPEAKS?

EVEN IF IT MEANS I HAVE TO KILL HIM...

WHEN I THINK OF HOW WE CAN NEVER BE TOGETHER..! OHHH!

PLEASE DON'T LOOK SO SAD, DIAO CHAN. I SWEAR TO SAVE YOU FROM YOUR FATE.

AH!

TO HEAR THAT YOU WOULD GO THAT FAR TO BE TOGETHER WITH ME... I CANNOT DESCRIBE HOW HAPPY I AM.

L-LU BU...!

BANQUET OF THE PLUCKED TASSEL

AGHHH!

CHANCELLOR!

SOMEONE HELP!

WHAT HAPPENED, CHANCELLOR?

WHAT TOOK YOU SLOW-POKES SO LONG!?

ACHOO!

UNFORGIVABLE! I'LL HAVE LU BU'S HEAD FOR THIS...!

AH, LI RU.

CHANCELLOR?

YES, JUST LOOK AT MY STATE RIGHT NOW!

I HEARD THAT SOMETHING HAPPENED BETWEEN SIR AND LU BU.

I CANNOT FORGIVE HIM ANYMORE. I WANT HIM ARRESTED AND EXECUTED!

WHAT!?

I BEG OF SIR TO ONCE MORE CALM HIS RAGE.

BUT...

I UNDERSTAND VERY WELL WHY SIR IS ANGRY WITH LU BU AND I CAN SYMPATHIZE. HOWEVER, LU BU IS NECCESSARY FOR SIR'S AMBITIONS. I ONLY ASK THAT LU BU IS PARDONED UNTIL THE DAY SIR BECOMES THE NEW EMPEROR.

?

BANQUET OF THE PLUCKED TASSEL?

HAS THE CHANCELLOR EVER HEARD OF THE BANQUET OF THE PLUCKED TASSEL?

IT IS A TALE OF KING ZHUANG OF CHU DURING THE SPRING AND AUTUMN PERIOD.

ONE DAY, KING ZHUANG HELD A BANQUET IN HONOUR OF HIS GENERALS WHO HAD WON A BATTLE.

ALL OF A SUDDEN A STRONG WIND PASSED BY AND ALL THE CANDLES WERE BLOWN OUT.

BUT THE MEN WELCOMED THE DARKNESS AND CONTINUED ON WITH THEIR DRINKING.

BUT AMIDST THE DARKNESS, SOMEONE STOLE THE LIPS OF KING ZHUANG'S FAVOURITE CONSORT.

AND QUICKLY RAN OVER TO HER HUSBANDS SIDE.

THE CONSORT SECRETLY MARKED THE MANS HEAD WARE WITH HER TASSEL.

DEAR, SOMEONE JUST DARED TO STEAL A KISS FROM ME IN THE DARKNESS BUT I PLUCKED MY TASSEL TO MARK HIS HEADWARE. PLEASE QUICKLY RELIGHT THE CANDLES SO YOU MAY ARREST THE BOORISH MAN.

GENTLEMEN, MY WIFE JUST INFORMED ME THAT SHE HAD SUFFERED AN ILL-MANNERED DISRESPECTFUL ACT.

NO, LET US WAIT A LITTLE BEFORE RELIGHTING THE CANDLES.

AND INSTEAD INTERPRET THE INCIDENT AS A SIGN THAT YOU GENTLEMEN ARE GREATLY ENJOYING THIS BANQUET.

BUT THESE PRANKS AND JOKES CAN HAPPEN IN A BANQUET WHERE WE'VE ALL HAD MUCH TO DRINK. SO I SHALL OVERLOOK THIS INSTANCE,

SO LET US PUT AWAY ALL FORMALITIES AND RANK FOR THE TIME BEING BY REMOVING OUR HEADWARE.

NOW RELIGHT THE CANDLES!

AND SO THE BANQUET ENDED WITHOUT THE PERPETRATOR BEING FOUND OUT

LET US RETURN BACK TO OUR MERRIMENTS ONCE MORE!

YEARS LATER, KING ZHUANG FOUND HIMSELF SURROUNDED BY ENEMY QIN FORCES ON ALL SIDES OF THE BATTLEFIELD.

JUST WHEN HE LOST ALL HOPE, ONE MAN ON A HORSE BROKE THROUGH ENEMY LINES.

AND SINGLE HANDEDLY RESCUED KING ZHUANG AT THE COST OF HIS OWN BODY BEING PIERCED BY NUMEROUS ARROWS

AND THE BRAVE WARRIOR REPLIED THUS.
AFTERWARDS, KING ZHUANG THANKED THE MAN FOR SACRIFICING HIS LIFE

BUT THANKS TO YOUR MAJESTY, I WAS ABLE TO AVOID BEING SHAMED AND HUMILIATED.

SINCE THAT DAY, I VOWED TO GIVE MY LIFE FOR YOUR MAJESTY'S SAKE TO REPAY THE FAVOUR.

YEARS AGO, IT WAS I WHO STOLE THE LIPS OF YOUR MAJESTY'S BELOVED CONSORT IN MY DRUNKEN STUPOR AT THAT BANQUET WHEN THE CANDLES WENT OUT.

AFTER CONFESSING, THE WARRIOR DIED WITH A SMILE ON HIS FACE

NEEDLESS TO SAY, KING ZHUANG'S BENEVOLENCE TO HIS SUBJECTS IS WHAT SAVED HIS LIFE. THIS TALE IS WHAT PEOPLE COMMONLY REFER TO AS THE "BANQUET OF THE PLUCKED TASSEL."

HMM...

WHAT DOES THE CHAN-CELLOR THINK OF IT?

IF LU BU IS SO INFATUATED WITH DIAO CHAN, THEN WHY NOT GIVE HER TO HIM?

MNN...

THEN LU BU WOULD GLADLY GIVE HIS LIFE FOR SIR'S SAKE AS THE BRAVE WARRIOR IN THE BANQUET OF THE PLUCKED TASSEL DID.

MNN...

CHANCELLOR, WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT? AN EMPEROR'S THRONE OR A MERE WOMAN?

A WISE JUDGMENT, SIR. I AM SURE EVERYTHING WILL GO SMOOTHLY FROM NOW ON.

FINE, I UNDER-STAND.

CERTAINLY, LU BU IS NECCESSARY TO ACHIEVE MY DREAMS OF BECOMING EMPEROR.

LI RU HAS GIVEN ME GOOD ADVICE ONCE AGAIN.

BANQUET OF THE PLUCKED TASSEL, HUH?

NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO BE WASTING AWAY MY DAYS WITH A MERE WOMAN...

TRANSLATED BY HOX

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